

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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A DARK NIGHT'S WORK.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF "MARY BARTON."

CHAPTER IX.

RALPH CORBET found it a very difficult thing to keep down his curiosity during the next few days. It was a miserable thing to have Ellinor's unspoken secret severing them like a phantom. But he had given her his word that he would make no further inquiries from her. Indeed, he thought he could well enough make out the outline of past events; still, there was too much left to conjecture for his mind not to be always busy on the subject. He felt inclined to probe Mr. Wilkins, in their after-dinner conversation, in which his host was frank and lax enough on many subjects. But once touch on the name of Dunster, and Mr. Wilkins sank into a kind of suspicious depression of spirits; talking little, and with evident caution; and from time to time shooting furtive glances at his interlocutor's face. Ellinor was resolutely impervious to any attempts of his to bring his conversations with her back to the subject which more and more engrossed Ralph Corbet's mind. She had done her duty, as she understood it; and had received assurances which she was only too glad to believe fondly with all the tender faith of her heart. Whatever came to pass, Ralph's love would still be hers; nor was he unwarned of what might come to pass in some dread future day. So she shut her eyes to what might be in store for her (and, after all, the chances were immeasurably in her favour); and she bent herself with her whole strength into enjoying the present. Day by day, Mr. Corbet's spirits flagged. He was, however, so generally uniform in the tenor of his talk—never very merry, and always avoiding any subject that might call out deep feeling either on his own, or any one else's part, that few people were aware of his changes of mood. Ellinor felt them, though she would not acknowledge them; it was bringing her too much face to face with the great terror of her life.

One morning he announced the fact of his brother's approaching marriage; the wedding was hastened on account of some impending event in the duke's family; and the home letter he had received that day, was to bid his presence at Stokely Castle, and also to desire him to be at

home by a certain time, not very distant, in order to look over the requisite legal papers, and to give his assent to some of them. He gave many reasons why this unlooked-for departure of his was absolutely necessary; but no one doubted it. He need not have alleged such reiterated excuses. The truth was, he was restrained and uncomfortable at Ford Bank ever since Ellinor's confidence. He could not rightly calculate on the most desirable course for his own interests, while his love for her was constantly being renewed by her sweet presence. Away from her, he could judge more wisely. Nor did he allege any false reasons for his departure; but the sense of relief to himself was so great at his real home, that he was afraid of having it perceived by others; and so took the very way which, if others had been as penetrating as himself, would have betrayed him.

Mr. Wilkins, too, had begun to feel the restraint of Ralph's grave watchful presence. Ellinor was not strong enough to be married; nor was the promised money forthcoming if she had been. And to have a fellow dawdling about the house all day, sauntering into the flower-garden, peering about everywhere, and having a kind of right to put all manner of unexpected questions, was anything but agreeable. It was only Ellinor that clung to his presence; clung as though some shadow of what might happen before they met again had fallen on her spirit. As soon as he had left the house she flew up to a spare bedroom window, to watch for the last glimpse of the fly which was taking him into the town. And then she kissed the part of the pane on which his figure, waving an arm out of the carriage window, had last appeared; and went down slowly to gather together all the things he had last touched—the pen he had mended, the flower he had played with, and to lock them up in the little quaint cabinet that had held her treasures since she was a tiny child.

Miss Monro was, perhaps, very wise in proposing the translation of a difficult part of Dante for a distraction to Ellinor. The girl went meekly, if reluctantly, to the task set her by her good governess, and by-and-by her mind became braced by the exertion.

Ralph's people were not very slow in discovering that something had not gone on quite smoothly with him at Ford Bank. They knew his ways

and looks with family intuition, and could easily be certain thus far. -But not even his mother's skilfullest wiles, nor his favourite sister's coaxing, could obtain a word or a hint; and when his father, the squire, who had heard the opinions of the female part of the family on this head, began, in his honest blustering way, in their tête-à-têtes after dinner, to hope that Ralph was thinking better than to run his head into that confounded Hamley attorney's noose, Ralph gravely required Mr. Corbet to explain his meaning, which he professed not to understand so worded. And when the squire had, with much perplexity, put it into the plain terms of hoping that his son was thinking of breaking off his engagement to Miss Wilkins, Ralph coolly asked him if he was aware that, in that case, he should lose all title to being a man of honour, and might have an action brought against him for breach of promise? Yet not the less for all this was the idea in his mind as a future possibility.

Before very long the Corbet family moved, en masse, to Stokely Castle for the wedding. Of course, Ralph associated on equal terms with the magnates of the county, who were the employers of Ellinor's father, and spoke of him always as "Wilkins," just as they spoke of the butler as "Simmons." Here, too, among a class of men high above local gossip, and thus unaware of his engagement, he learnt the popular opinion respecting his future father-in-law; an opinion not entirely respectful, though intermingled with a good deal of personal liking. "Poor Wilkins," as they called him, "was sadly extravagant for a man in his position; had no right to spend money, and act as if he were a man of independent fortune." His habits of life were criticised; and pity, not free from blame, was bestowed upon him for the losses he had sustained from his late clerk's disappearance and defalcation. But what could be expected, if a man did not choose to attend to his own business?

The wedding went by, as grand weddings do, without let or hindrance, according to the approved pattern. A cabinet minister honoured it with his presence, and, being a distant relation of the Morants, remained for a few days after the grand occasion. During this time he became rather intimate with Ralph Corbet; many of their tastes were in common. Ralph took a great interest in the manner of working out political questions; in the balance and state of parties; and had the right appreciation of the exact qualities on which the minister piqued himself. In return, the latter was always on the look-out for promising young men, who, either by their capability of speech-making, or article-writing, might advance the views of his party. Recognising the powers he most valued in Ralph, he spared no pains to attach him to his own political set. When they separated, it was with the full understanding that they were to see a good deal of each other in London.

The holiday Ralph allowed himself was pass-

ing rapidly away; but, before he returned to his chambers and his hard work, he had promised to spend a few more days with Ellinor; and it suited him to go straight from the duke's to Ford Bank. He left the castle soon after breakfast—the luxurious, elegant breakfast, served by domestics who performed their work with the accuracy and perfection of machines. He arrived at Ford Bank before the man-servant had quite done the dirtier part of his morning's work, and he came to the glass-door in his striped cotton jacket, a little soiled, and rolling up his working apron. Ellinor was not yet quite strong enough to get up and go out and gather flowers for the rooms, so those left from yesterday were rather faded; in short, the contrast from entire completeness and exquisite freshness of arrangement struck forcibly upon Ralph's perceptions, which were critical rather than appreciative; and, as his affections were always subdued to his intellect, Ellinor's lovely face and graceful figure flying to meet him did not gain his full approval, because her hair was dressed in an old-fashioned way, her waist was either too long or too short, her sleeves too full or too tight for the standard of fashion to which his eye had been accustomed while scanning the bridesmaids and various high-born ladies at Stokely Castle.

But, as he had always piqued himself upon being able to put on one side all superficial worldliness in his chase after power, it did not do for him to shrink from facing and seeing the incompleteness of moderate means. Only marriage upon moderate means was gradually becoming more distasteful to him.

Nor did his intercourse with Lord Bolton, the cabinet minister before mentioned, tend to reconcile him to early matrimony. At Lord Bolton's house he met polished and intellectual society, and all that smoothness in ministering to the lower wants in eating and drinking which seems to provide that the right thing shall always be at the right place at the right time, so that the want of it shall never impede for an instant the feast of wit or reason; while, if he went to the houses of his friends, men of the same college and standing as himself, who had been seduced into early marriages, he was uncomfortably aware of numerous inconsistencies and hitches in their ménages. Besides, the idea of the possible disgrace that might befall the family with whom he thought of allying himself haunted him with the tenacity and also with the exaggeration of a nightmare whenever he had overworked himself in his search after available and profitable knowledge, or had a fit of indigestion after the exquisite dinners he was learning so well to appreciate.

Christmas was, of course, to be devoted to his own family; it was an unavoidable necessity, as he told Ellinor, while, in reality, he was learning to find absence from his betrothed something of a relief. Yet the wranglings and folly of his home, even blessed by the presence of a Lady

Maria, made him look forward to Easter at Ford Bank with something of the old pleasure.

Ellinor, with the fine tact which love gives, had discovered his annoyance at various little incongruities in the household at the time of his second visit in the previous autumn; and had laboured to make all as perfect as she could before his return. But she had much to struggle against. For the first time in her life there was a great want of ready money; she could scarcely obtain the servants' wages; and the bill for the spring seeds was a heavy weight on her conscience. For Miss Monro's methodical habits had taught her pupil great exactitude as to all money matters.

Then, her father's temper had become very uncertain. He avoided being alone with her whenever he possibly could; and the consciousness of this, and of the terrible mutual secret which was the cause of this estrangement, were the reasons why Ellinor never recovered her pretty youthful bloom after her illness. Of course it was to it that the outside world attributed her changed appearance. They would shake their heads and say, "Ah, poor Miss Wilkins! What a lovely creature she was before that fever!"

But youth is youth, and will assert itself in a certain elasticity of body and spirits; and at times Ellinor forgot that fearful night for several hours together. Even when her father's averted eye brought it all once more before her, she had learnt to form excuses, and palliations, and to regard Mr. Dunster's death as only the consequence of an unfortunate accident. But she tried to put the miserable remembrance entirely out of her mind; to go on from day to day thinking only of the day; and how to arrange it so as to cause the least irritation to her father. She would so gladly have spoken to him on the one subject which overshadowed all their intercourse; she fancied that by speaking she might have been able to banish the phantom, or reduce its terror to what she believed to be the due proportion. But her father was evidently determined to show that he was never more to be spoken to on that subject; and all she could do was to follow his lead on the rare occasions that they fell into something like the old confidential intercourse. As yet, to her, he had never given way to anger; but before her he had often spoken in a manner which both pained and terrified her. Sometimes his eye in the midst of his passion caught on her face of affright and dismay, and then he would stop, and make such an effort to control himself as sometimes ended in tears. Ellinor did not understand both these phases were owing to his increasing habit of drinking more than was good for him. She set them down as the direct effects of a sorely burdened conscience; and strove more and more to plan for his daily life at home, how it should go on with oiled wheels, neither a jerk nor a jar. It was no wonder she looked wistful, and careworn, and old. Miss Monro was her great comfort; the total unconsciousness on that lady's part of anything below the surface; and yet her full and

delicate recognition of all the little daily cares and trials, made her sympathy most valuable to Ellinor, while there was no need to fear that it would ever even give Miss Monro that power of seeing into the heart of things which it frequently confers upon imaginative people, who are deeply attached to some one in sorrow.

There was a strong bond between Ellinor and Dixon, although they scarcely ever exchanged a word but on the most common-place subjects; but their silence was based on different feelings from that which separated Ellinor from her father. Ellinor and Dixon could not speak freely, because their hearts were full of pity for the faulty man whom they both loved so well, and tried so hard to respect.

This was the state of the household to which Ralph Corbet came down at Easter. He might have been known in London as a brilliant dinner-out by this time; but he could not afford to throw his life away in fireworks; he calculated his forces, and condensed their power as much as might be, only visiting where he was likely to meet men who could help him in his future career. He had been invited to spend the Easter vacation at a certain country-house, which would be full of such human stepping-stones; and he declined it to keep his word to Ellinor, and go to Ford Bank. But he could not help looking upon himself a little in the light of a martyr to duty; and perhaps this view of his own merits made him chafe under his future father-in-law's irritability of manner, which now showed itself even to him. He found himself distinctly regretting that he had suffered himself to be engaged so early in life; and having become conscious of the temptation and not having repelled it at once, of course it returned and returned, and gradually obtained the mastery over him. What was to be gained by keeping to his engagement to Ellinor? He should have a delicate wife to look after, and even more than the common additional expenses of married life. He should have a father-in-law whose character at best had had only a local and provincial respectability; which it was now daily losing by habits which were both sensual and vulgarising; a man, too, who was strangely changing from joyous geniality into moody surliness. Besides, he doubted if, in the evident change in the prosperity of the family, the fortune to be paid down on the occasion of his marriage to Ellinor could be forthcoming. And above all, and around all, there hovered the shadow of some unrevealed disgrace, which might come to light at any time, and involve him in it. He thought he had pretty well ascertained the nature of this possible shame, and had little doubt but that it would turn out to be that Dunster's disappearance to America, or elsewhere, had been an arranged plan with Mr. Wilkins. Although Mr. Ralph Corbet was capable of suspecting this mean crime (so far removed from the impulsive commission of the past sin, which was dragging Mr. Wilkins daily lower and lower down), it was of a kind

that was peculiarly distasteful to the acute lawyer, who foresaw how such base conduct would taint all whose names were ever mentioned, even by chance, in connexion with it. He used to lie miserably tossing on his sleepless bed, turning over all these things in the night season. He was tormented by all these thoughts; he would bitterly regret the past events that connected him with Ellinor, from the day when he first came to read with Mr. Ness, up to the present time. But when he came down in the morning, and saw the faded Ellinor flash into momentary beauty at his entrance into the dining-room, and when she blushing drew near with the one single flower freshly gathered, which it had been her custom to place in his button-hole when he came down to breakfast, he felt as if his better self was stronger than temptation, and as if he must be an honest man and honourable lover, even against his wish.

As the day wore on the temptation gathered strength. Mr. Wilkins came down, and while he was on the scene Ellinor seemed always engrossed by her father, who apparently cared little enough for all her attentions. Then there was a complaining of the food, which did not suit the sickly palate of a man who had drunk hard the night before; and possibly these complaints were extended to the servants, and their incompleteness or incapacity was brought thus prominently before the eyes of Ralph, who would have preferred to eat a dry crust in silence, or to have gone without breakfast altogether, if he could have had intellectual conversation of some high order, to having the greatest dainties with the knowledge of the care required in their preparation thus coarsely discussed before him. By the time such breakfasts were finished, Ellinor looked thirty, and her spirits were gone for the day. It had become difficult for him to contract his mind to her small domestic interests, and she had little else to talk to him about, now that he responded but curtly to all her questions about himself, and was weary of professing a love which he was ceasing to feel, in all the passionate nothings which usually make up so much of lovers' talk. The books she had been reading were old classics, whose place in literature no longer admitted of keen discussion; the poor whom she cared for were all very well in their way; and, if they could have been brought in to illustrate a theory, hearing about them might have been of some use; but, as it was, simply tiresome to hear day after day of Betty Palmer's rheumatism and Mrs. Day's baby's fits. There was no talking politics with her, because she was so ignorant that she always agreed with what he said.

He even grew to find luncheon and Miss Monro not unpleasant varieties to his monotonous tête-à-têtes. Then came the walk, generally to the town to fetch Mr. Wilkins from his office; and once or twice it was pretty evident how he had been employing his hours. One day in particular his walk was so unsteady and his

speech so thick, that Ralph could only wonder how it was that Ellinor did not perceive the cause; but she was too openly anxious about the headache of which her father complained to have been at all aware of the previous self-indulgence which must have brought it on. This very afternoon, as ill-luck would have it, the Duke of Hinton and a gentleman whom Ralph had met in town at Lord Bolton's, rode by, and recognised him; saw Ralph supporting a tipsy man with such quiet friendly interest as must show all passers-by that they were previous friends. Mr. Corbet chafed and fumed inwardly all the way home after this unfortunate occurrence; he was in a thoroughly evil temper before they reached Ford Bank, but he had too much self-command to let this be very apparent. He turned into the shrubbery-paths, leaving Ellinor to take her father into the quietness of his own room, there to lie down and shake off his headache.

Ralph walked along, ruminating in gloomy mood as to what was to be done; how he could best extricate himself from the miserable relation in which he had placed himself by giving way to impulse. Almost before he was aware, a little hand stole within his folded arms, and Ellinor's sweet sad eyes looked into his.

"I have put papa down for an hour's rest before dinner," said she. "His head seems to ache terribly."

Ralph was silent and unsympathising, trying to nerve himself up to be disagreeable, but finding it difficult in face of such sweet trust.

"Do you remember our conversation last autumn, Ellinor?" he began, at length.

Her head sunk. They were near a garden-seat, and she quietly sat down, without speaking.

"About some disgrace which you then fancied hung over you?" No answer. "Does it still hang over you?"

"Yes!" she whispered, with a heavy sigh.

"And your father knows of this, of course?"

"Yes!" again, in the same tone; and then silence.

"I think it is doing him harm," at length Ralph went on, decidedly.

"I am afraid it is," she said, in a low tone.

"I wish you would tell me what it is," he said, a little impatiently. "I might be able to help you about it."

"No! you could not," replied Ellinor. "I was sorry to my very heart to tell you what I did; I did not want help; all that is past. But I wanted to know if you thought that a person situated as I was, was justified in marrying any one ignorant of what might happen; what I do hope and trust never will."

"But if I don't know what you are alluding to in this mysterious way you must see—don't you see, love, I am in the position of the ignorant man, whom I think you said you could not feel it right to marry. Why don't you tell me straight out what it is?" He could not help his irritation betraying itself in his tones and manner of speaking. She bent a little forward, and looked

full into his face, as though to pierce to the very heart's truth of him. Then she said, as quietly as she ever had spoken in her life,

"You wish to break off our engagement?"

He reddened and grew indignant in a moment. "What nonsense! Just because I ask a question and make a remark! I think your illness must have made you fanciful, Ellinor. Surely nothing I said deserves such an interpretation. On the contrary, have I not shown the sincerity and depth of my affection to you by clinging to you through—through everything?"

He was going to say "through the wearying opposition of my family," but he stopped short, for he knew that the very fact of his mother's opposition had only made him the more determined to have his own way in the first instance; and even now he did not intend to let out what he had concealed up to this time, that his friends all regretted his imprudent engagement.

Ellinor sat silently gazing out upon the meadows, but seeing nothing. Then she put her hand into his. "I quite trust you, Ralph. I was wrong to doubt. I am afraid I have grown fanciful and silly."

He was rather put to it for the right words, for she had precisely divined the dim thought that had overshadowed his mind when she had looked so intently at him. But he caressed her, and reassured her with fond words, as incoherent as lovers' words generally are.

By-and-by they sauntered homewards. When they reached the house, Ellinor left him, and flew up to see how her father was. When Ralph went into his own room he was vexed with himself, both for what he had said and what he had not said. His mental look-out was not satisfactory.

Neither he nor Mr. Wilkins were in good humour with the world in general at dinner-time, and it needs little in such cases to condense and turn the lowering tempers into one particular direction. As long as Ellinor and Miss Monro stayed in the dining-room, a sort of moody peace had been kept up, the ladies talking incessantly to each other about the trivial nothings of their daily life, with an instinctive consciousness that if they did not chatter on, something would be said by one of the gentlemen which would be distasteful to the other.

As soon as Ralph had shut the door behind them, Mr. Wilkins went to the sideboard, and took out a bottle which had not previously made its appearance.

"Have a little cognac?" he asked, with an assumption of carelessness, as he poured out a wine-glassful. "It's a capital thing for the headache; and this nasty lowering weather has given me a racking headache all day."

"I am sorry for it," said Ralph, "for I had wanted particularly to speak to you about business—about my marriage, in fact."

"Well! speak away, I'm as clear-headed as any man, if that's what you mean?"

Ralph bowed, a little contemptuously.

"What I wanted to say was, that I am anxious

to have all things arranged for my marriage in August. Ellinor is so much better now; in fact, so strong, that I think we may reckon upon her standing the change to a London life pretty well."

Mr. Wilkins stared at him rather blankly; but did not immediately speak.

"Of course I may have the deeds drawn up in which, as by previous arrangement, you advance a certain portion of Ellinor's fortune for the purposes therein to be assigned; as we settled last year when I hoped to have been married in August?"

A thought flitted through Mr. Wilkins's confused brain that he should find it impossible to produce the thousands required without having recourse to the money-lenders, who were already making difficulties, and charging him usurious interest for the advances they had lately made; and he unwisely tried to obtain a diminution in the sum he had originally proposed to give Ellinor. "Unwisely," because he might have read Ralph's character better than to suppose he would easily consent to any diminution without good and sufficient reason being given; or without some promise of compensating advantages in the future for the present sacrifice asked from him. But, perhaps, Mr. Wilkins, dulled as he was by wine, thought he could allege a good and sufficient reason, for he said:

"You must not be hard upon me, Ralph. That promise was made before—before I exactly knew the state of my affairs!"

"Before Dunster's disappearance, in fact," said Mr. Corbet, fixing his steady penetrating eyes on Mr. Wilkins's countenance.

"Yes—exactly—before Dunster's—" mumbled out Mr. Wilkins, red and confused, and not finishing his sentence.

"By the way," said Ralph (for with careful carelessness of manner he thought he could extract something of the real nature of the impending disgrace from his companion in the state in which he then was; and if he only knew more about this danger he could guard against it; guard others: perhaps himself), "By the way, have you ever heard anything of Dunster since he went off to—America, isn't it thought?"

He was startled beyond his power of self-control by the instantaneous change in Mr. Wilkins which his question produced. Both started up; Mr. Wilkins white, shaking, and trying to say something, but unable to form a sensible sentence.

"Good God! sir, what is the matter?" said Ralph, alarmed at these signs of physical suffering.

Mr. Wilkins sat down, and repelled his nearer approach without speaking.

"It is nothing, only this headache which shoots through me at times. Don't look at me, sir, in that way. It is very unpleasant to find another man's eyes perpetually fixed upon you."

"I beg your pardon," said Ralph, coldly; his short-lived sympathy thus repulsed, giving way to his curiosity. But he waited for a minute or

two without daring to renew the conversation at the point where they had stopped: whether interrupted by bodily or mental discomfort on the part of his companion he was not quite sure. While he hesitated how to begin again on the subject, Mr. Wilkins pulled the bottle of brandy to himself and filled his glass again, tossing off the spirit as if it had been water. Then he tried to look Mr. Corbet full in the face, with a stare as pertinacious as he could make it, but very different from the keen observant gaze which was trying to read him through.

"What were we talking about?" said Ralph, at length, with the most natural air in the world, just as if he had really been forgetful of some half-discussed subject of interest.

"Of what you'd a d—d deal better hold your tongue about," growled out Mr. Wilkins, in a surly thick voice.

"Sir!" said Ralph, starting to his feet with real passion at being so addressed by "Wilkins the attorney."

"Yes," continued the latter, "I'll manage my own affairs, and allow of no meddling and no questioning. I said so once before, and I was not minded, and bad came of it; and now I say it again. And if you're to come here and put impertinent questions, and stare at me as you've been doing this half-hour past, why, the sooner you leave this house the better!"

Ralph half turned to take him at his word, and go at once; but then he "gave Ellinor another chance," as he worded it in his thoughts; but it was in no spirit of conciliation that he said:

"You've taken too much of that stuff, sir. You don't know what you're saying. If you did, I should leave your house at once, never to return."

"You think so, do you?" said Mr. Wilkins, trying to stand up, and look dignified and sober. "I say, sir, that if you ever venture again to talk and look as you have done to-night, why, sir, I will ring the bell and have you shown the door by my servants. So now you're warned, my fine fellow!" He sat down, laughing a foolish tipsy laugh of triumph. In another minute his arm was held firmly but gently by Ralph.

"Listen, Mr. Wilkins!" he said, in a low hoarse voice. "You shall never have to say to me twice what you have said to-night. Henceforward we are as strangers to each other. As to Ellinor"—his tones softened a little, and he sighed in spite of himself—"I do not think we should have been happy. I believe our engagement was formed when we were too young to know our own minds, but I would have done my duty and kept to my word; but you, sir, have yourself severed the connexion between us by your insolence to-night. I, to be turned out of your house by your servants!—I, a Corbet of Westley, who would not submit to such threats from a peer of the realm, let him be ever so drunk!" He was out of the room, almost out of the house, before he had spoken the last words.

Mr. Wilkins sat still, first fiercely angry, then astonished, and lastly dismayed into sobriety.

"Corbet, Corbet! Ralph!" he called in vain; then he got up and went to the door, opened it, looked into the fully-lighted hall; all was so quiet there that he could hear the quiet voices of the women in the drawing-room talking together. He thought for a moment, went to the hat-stand, and missed Ralph's low-crowned straw hat.

Then he sat down once more in the dining-room, and endeavoured to make out exactly what had passed; but he could not believe that Mr. Corbet had come to any enduring or final resolution to break off his engagement, and he had almost reasoned himself back into his former state of indignation at impertinence and injury, when Ellinor came in, pale, hurried, and anxious.

"Papa! what does this mean?" said she, putting an open note into his hand. He took up his glasses, but his hand shook so that he could hardly read. The note was from the parsonage, to Ellinor; only three lines sent by Mr. Ness's servant, who had come to fetch Mr. Corbet's things. He had written three lines with some consideration for Ellinor, even when he was in his first flush of anger against her father, and it must be confessed of relief at his own freedom, thus brought about by the act of another, and not of his own working out, which partly saved his conscience. The note ran thus:

"DEAR ELLINOR,—Words have passed between your father and me which have obliged me to leave his house, I fear, never to return to it. I will write more fully to-morrow. But do not grieve too much, for I am not, and never have been, good enough for you. God bless you, my dearest Nelly, though I call you so for the last time.—R. C."

"Papa, what is it?" Ellinor cried, clasping her hands together, as her father sat silent, vacantly gazing into the fire, after finishing the note.

"I don't know!" said he, looking up at her piteously; "it's the world, I think. Everything goes wrong with me and mine: it went wrong before THAT night—so it can't be that, can it, Ellinor?"

"Oh, papa!" said she, kneeling down by him, her face hidden on his breast.

He put one arm languidly round her. "I used to read of Orestes and the Furies at Eton when I was a boy, and I thought it was all a heathen fiction. Poor little motherless girl!" said he, laying his other hand on her head, with the caressing gesture he had been accustomed to use when she had been a little child. "Did you love him so very dearly, Nelly?" he whispered, his cheek against hers; "for somehow of late he has not seemed to me to be good enough for thee. He has got an inkling that something has gone wrong; and he was very inquisitive—I may say, he questioned me in a relentless kind of way."

"Oh, papa, it was my doing, I am afraid. I said something long ago about possible disgrace."

He pushed her away; he stood up, and looked at her with the eyes dilated, half in fear, half in

fierceness, of an animal at bay; he did not heed that his abrupt movement had almost thrown her prostrate on the ground.

"You, Ellinor! You—you——"

"Oh, darling father, listen!" said she, creeping to his knees, and clasping them with her hands. "I said it as if it were a possible case of some one else—last August—but he immediately applied it, and asked me if it was over me the disgrace, or shame—I forget the words we used—hung; and what could I say?"

"Anything—anything to put him off the scent. God help me, I am a lost man, betrayed by my child!"

Ellinor let go of his knees, and covered her face. Every one stabbed at that poor heart. In a minute or so her father spoke again.

"I don't mean what I say. I often don't mean it now. Ellinor, you must forgive me, my child!" He stooped, and lifted her up, and sat down, taking her on his knee, and smoothing her hair off her hot forehead. "Remember, child, how very miserable I am, and have forgiveness for me. He had none, and yet he must have seen I had been drinking."

"Drinking, papa!" said Ellinor, raising her head, and looking at him with sorrowful surprise.

"Yes. I drink now to try and forget," said he, blushing and confused.

"Oh, how miserable we are!" cried Ellinor, bursting into tears—"how very miserable! It seems almost as if God had forgotten to comfort us!"

"Hush! hush!" said he. "Your mother said once she did so pray that you might grow up religious; you must be religious, child, because she prayed for it so often. Poor Lettice, how glad I am that you are dead!" Here he began to cry like a child. Ellinor comforted him with kisses rather than words. He pushed her away, after a while, and said, sharply: "How much does he know? I must make sure of that. How much did you tell him, Ellinor?"

"Nothing—nothing, indeed, papa, but what I told you just now!"

"Tell it me again—the exact words!"

"I will, as well as I can; but it was last August. I only said, 'Was it right for a woman to marry, knowing that disgrace hung over her, and keeping her lover in ignorance of it?'"

"That was all, you are sure?"

"Yes. He immediately applied the case to me—to ourselves."

"And he never wanted to know what was the nature of the threatened disgrace?"

"Yes, he did."

"And you told him?"

"No, not a word more. He referred to the subject again to-day, in the shrubbery; but I told him nothing more. You quite believe me, don't you, papa?"

He pressed her to him, but did not speak. Then he took the note up again, and read it with as much care and attention as he could collect in his agitated state of mind.

"Nelly," said he, at length, "he says true; he is not good enough for thee. He shrinks from the thought of the disgrace. Thou must stand alone, and bear the sins of thy father."

He shook so much as he said this, that Ellinor had to put any suffering of her own on one side, and try to confine her thoughts to the necessity of getting her father immediately up to bed. She sat by him till he went to sleep and she could leave him, and go to her own room, to forgetfulness and rest, if she could find those priceless blessings.

DRESS IN PARIS.

THERE is a recent publication, entitled *La Nouvelle Babylone, Lettres d'un Provincial en Tournée à Paris*. The new Babylon, of course, is Paris; the Provincial who has been taking a turn there is M. Eugène Pelletan, formerly a notary, but latterly a newspaper writer, to whom all the newspapers are closed, by authority. We cannot conceive our own Home Secretary intimating to the Times, to the Herald, to the Daily or Illustrated News, that it was as much as their place was worth to allow Mr. Reddyriter or Mr. Hitemhard to remain "on them" a week longer; but so it is elsewhere.

To take his jaunt to Paris our acute Provincial started by railway from Bordeaux, which suggested to him the following reflection: Why do we pay for our place in proportion to the distance to be travelled? This mode of tariffing steam-locomotion places the extremities of France (or of any other country where the railway system prevails) in a condition of inferiority. It recompenses Orleans for being situated on the Loire, while it punishes Bordeaux for having pitched her tent beside the Garonne. The same of York compared with Edinburgh.

The invariable answer is, that the traveller who goes the furthest ought to pay the most money; for the reason that the railway from Paris to Bordeaux cost more than that from Paris to Orleans, and that the company burns more coal in making the total journey than in traversing only the fifth portion of it. The argument wears a logical semblance which serves only to mislead. It was in virtue of this argument that the postage of letters used to be in proportion to the distance. It honestly took for granted that a sealed envelope caused a greater expense to the Post-office by pushing on to Marseilles than by stopping half way.

But one day, a clever fellow mounted the tribune, and reasoned thus [Had it not first been so reasoned in a place where there is no tribune?]: Since the administration has established a mail service over the whole extent of its territory—since this service acts regularly, universally, and punctually every day, whatever be the number of letters sent—what does it matter whether a letter go here or there? The service does its duty all the same, from one end of France to the other, and the increase of distance for a letter no more increases the expense

to the administration than the diminution of the distance causes any economy. The argument made its fortune. Could it not be applied to railway travelling?

Granted that a traveller is a more cumbersome article than a sheet of paper folded and stuck into an envelope. Granted that the lowering of the prices would double the number of travellers, and, consequently, the expenses for accommodation and locomotion. On that point, there would be a rule of proportion to settle. Therefore, without requiring an uniform rate, as for the post, we might certainly demand a reduction of the tariff in proportion to the distance.

What is here suggested is not an imaginary scheme, but an experiment already tried, a reality in execution. There are several companies who at this moment apply the system of diminished charges in proportion to the length of the journey; but the favour is solely granted to packages in goods trains. But why should men be treated differently? Why should living parcels cost the company more than parcels done up in packing-cloth? Is it because the one get up into the carriages of themselves, whilst the others have to be hauled into their places by the aid of trucks and pulleys?—because the former weigh from one to two hundred pounds, and the latter from one to two thousand?

Before approaching the decorations of the ladies, let us cast a glance at the decorations of Paris. Why has half Paris been demolished, to be built up new again, fresh and fine? M. Pelletan is not a blind admirer of the change. Ground is of such enormous value, that room is ferociously economised. The new houses display their coquetry to the street; their façade is adorned with sculptured embroidery; but enter them. They are nothing but cellular prisons; there are no chambers, nothing but closets; not even closets, only ships' cabins. You can't breathe in them, you are stifled; there is hardly room to stretch your legs before the fireplace. The architect thinks he has done too much for the kitchen, if the cook can stand upright in it.

They believed that they would ventilate Paris by opening a multitude of Boulevards right and left. They have, in fact, ventilated the houses which look out on the new thoroughfares. But if the houses of the old time, fronted narrow streets, they had, at least, behind them, vast courts, and often even respectable gardens. The demolition of Paris has put in front what used to be behind, and has, moreover, diminished the column of respirable air. The new houses enjoy abundant daylight on the side next the Boulevards; but, on the other side, they look into narrow courts, or rather cellars, where at no time of the year can the sun shine. As the private apartments for the most part enter into this sort of perpendicular well-drain, public salubrity has lost rather than gained by the revolution of the trowel.

And that is only one inconvenience. The English have the good sense to build houses which will last for a lifetime only, more or

less. They know by experience that from one century to another, not to say from one generation to another, Progress changes all the conditions of human existence. Now, at the pace at which Progress is stalking along, a century, now-o'-days, is hardly more than fifty years. Is it prudent, then, to reconstruct Paris with hewn stone and iron, when to-morrow, perhaps, some unknown chemist, now stooping over his work in a laboratory, will discover some new system of heating or lighting by electricity (neither more nor less marvellous than the telegraph), and already destined to upset the internal economy of every household?

Paris, it appears, has been rebuilt for three principal reasons. First, as a measure of strategy. Paris is now an entrenched camp, with the Louvre for its quadrilateral. The position is only to be stormed by cannon—a tool which rioters do not find at every gunsmith's. A second reason has been, to furnish employment to workpeople. A third, to dress Paris in Sunday clothes, for the reception of all the travellers of the universe. The invention of steam-travelling has converted it into the inn for Europe; which brings us back to the question of luxurious ornament, setting other considerations aside. A sovereign people ought to have a capital as elegant as a palace; an artistical people, a capital as splendid as a museum. The luxury of outward show is the sign of the superiority which one race has over another. Some one has defined it to be, the Beautiful added to the Useful. But, if possible, it should be restrained to the classes who are rich enough to indulge in it with impunity. In that case, luxury is a public service—a means by which the wealthy restore to society the overplus of their revenue. But when it invades all classes without distinction, it hinders them all from saving anything: that is, prevents the reproduction of wealth.

Assuredly, during the period when Louis Philippe reigned without much ceremony, with an umbrella under his arm, the capital of the civilised world could show, as at present, handsome mansions, equipages, and liveries, and handsome women displayed in ranks in the balcon of the Opera. But if luxury then kept its place in France, it took no more than its place; now, we see it everywhere, and nothing else. It reigns like the first personage of the State, like the hero of public conversation. Wherever you go, you hear talk of nothing but trimmings and turlowies, millions of francs, and correctional police.

Behold that lovely young woman, seated or rather sunk in her arm-chair, her head leaning on her hand, like the petrified statue of grief. A silent tear steals down her cheek, and the convulsive heaving of her bosom sends flashes from the diamonds that adorn it. Why is she weeping thus, in the pallor and affliction of Hecuba? Has death robbed her of her child, or an earthquake at the Bourse devoured her fortune? Not at all; her husband has just refused her a set of ornaments from Froment-

Meurice's establishment; and, at this moment of humiliation, she remembers a lady of her acquaintance fortunate enough to fling four hundred pounds into her head-dress. She suffers more cruelly, in every fibre of her body, than the wretched creatures who bedeck their persons with the finery of cast-off clothes. She will have that set of ornaments, nevertheless; she has said it, she has sworn it; she has it, in fact. Only—who paid for it?

The consequence of converting women into pattern-cards of the fashions is, that luxury and finery, in the course of time, deprive them of all sentiment of modesty. The easy duchesses of the Regency at last selected their waiting-maids from amongst their lacqueys. Their footmen laced their bodices or fastened the bows of their cravats. But would you believe that, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, there are bearded milliners—man-milliners, authentic men, men like Zouaves—who, with their solid fingers, take the exact dimensions of the highest titled women in Paris—robe them, unrobe them, and make them turn backward and forward before them, like the waxen figures in hair-dressers' shops.

You surely know the Rue de la Paix—the Street of Peace—so called because it commemorates War under the form of a column. There resides somewhere in it an Englishman who enjoys a considerably greater popularity in the world of furbelows than any Lenten preacher whatsoever. It must be avowed that this Anglais has created a novel art—the art of squeezing in a woman at the waist, with a precision hitherto unknown. He possesses the inspiration of handling the scissors, and the genius of sloping out. He knows to a thread the exact point where the stuff ought to fit tight, and where it ought to float loosely. At first sight he distinguishes, in the contorture of a lady, what ought to be displayed and what concealed. Destiny sets him from all eternity to discover the law of crinoline and the curve of the petticoat. In other respects a perfect gentleman, always fresh shaved, always frizzled: black coat, white cravat, and batiste shirt-cuffs fastened at the wrist with golden buttons; he officiates with all the gravity of a diplomatist who holds the fate of the world locked up in a drawer of his brain.

When he tries a dress on one of the living dolls of the Chaussée d'Antin, it is with profound attention that he touches, pricks, and sounds it, marking with chalk the defective fold. From time to time he draws back, in order to judge better of his work from a distance; he looks through his hand, closed into the shape of an eye-glass, and resumes with inspired finger the modelling of the drapery on the person of the patient. Sometimes he plants a flower here, and tries a bow of ribbon at its side, to test the general harmony of the toilette; meanwhile, the modern Eve, in process of formation, resigned and motionless, silently allows her moulder to accomplish his creation. At last, when he has handled the taffety like clay, and

arranged it according to his beau ideal, he goes and takes his place, with his head thrown back, on a sofa at the further end of the room, whence he commands the manœuvre with a wand of office.

"To the right, madame!" The client performs a quarter of a revolution.

"To the left!" The patient turns in the opposite direction.

"In front!" Madame faces the artist.

"Behind!" She turns her back.

When all is over, he dismisses her with a lordly gesture: "That will do, madame."

The Paris élégantes, marvelling at the delightful ways of their milliner in pantaloons, came to the conclusion that a man who made a robe so well, ought finally to put it in place himself—ought to stamp it with the mark of his lion's claw. Consequently, whenever there is a ball at court, or at the Hôtel de Ville, or an evening party of ceremony at the Palais Royal or the Luxembourg, at about ten o'clock at night you will see a long file of carriages drawn up before the house of the foreign ladies' tailor, with their melancholy coachmen buried in their wraps. Their mistresses mount the staircase of the Temple de la Toilette. As they enter, they each receive a ticket in the order of their arrival, and are shown into a waiting-room. As they can only appear one by one in the presence of the Pontiff of the Skirt, the last comers have sometimes to wait a long while. By a delicate attention, the master of the mansion does his best to solace as far as possible the fatigues of the ante-chamber. A buffet, liberally supplied, offers the consolation of meats and pastry. The ethereal petites maitresses of the Paris saloons lay in a stock of strength for the polka, by eating pâté de foie gras at discretion, and washing it down with Malmsey Madeira. Thus refreshed at the expense of the establishment, they intrepidly confront the operations of the toilette. He looks, he inspects, gives a finishing touch, sticks in a pin, arranges a flower, and madame has realised the prototype of elegance. The master gets rid of them one after the other, turning them off hand rapidly.

Nevertheless, like all great artists, this son of Albion has his caprices. He will clothe and criticise, doubtless, any woman; but he prefers ample women. He believes that these do most honour to his talent, putting it more plainly in evidence. For them he reserves all the attentions and all the ingenious flatteries of his profession. As to beauties who are reduced to the meagre volume which is rigorously indispensable to escape being a ghost, he consents to dress them, certainly—but without enthusiasm, solely as a duty of conscience.

There is not the slightest intention here to cast disavour on the talent of the English artist, and still less on his personal character; he has a profession which he exercises. He is engaged in a commercial undertaking, and he endeavours to attract customers; there is no harm in that, for it makes all the difference to him between prosperity and ruin. But what

are we to think of his customers, the aristocracy of the Exchange, virtuous, but sufficiently forgetful of themselves and their husbands to discuss with a man-milliner, at night, the perilous problem of the height of a dress?

And mark the contrast: in the same street, a course of literature, poetry, history, geography, &c., was open every evening, and conducted by professors of celebrity. Not one of those spoiled children of fortune who mounted to the first floor to try on a dress, ever had the curiosity to step in at the ground floor, to live for a few minutes a life of intelligence. And yet, at the very same time, the working dress-makers of that establishment put by a trifle out of their modest wages, to obtain admission to those literary conferences. Confined to their own thoughts during their long employment with the needle, they thirsted after knowledge as flowers thirst after dew. It is the working class, now, who read or listen; the classes at ease, dine and dance. Meanwhile, the hand is moving along the dial-plate, and a new generation is coming, with a mystery marked upon its forehead.

Would you like to know how much a fashionable wife costs her husband? You shall be favoured with a slight glimpse of the interior of a Parisian household.

A man of good family lately married a young lady, also of good family, in the eyes of the city. The match doubtless was the consequence of the acknowledged affinities which exist between birth and fortune. The husband bore the title of marquis, to which it appears he had really a right. He owned a heavily mortgaged estate in La Chausse, and a dilapidated chateau whose roof he got kept in repair by the year. He had served in the Second Hussars until he reached the rank of accountant-captain; but when his fortieth birthday arrived, he resigned his commission, in order to turn his territorial marquissate to the best account. He was an intrepid sportsman, an excellent shot, a still better dinner companion, and had hitherto kept clear of the matrimonial yoke.

The young lady was descended from a Seine-et-Marne miller, who had an instinctive knowledge of the science of flour, and who had got together, some say three, others four, millions of francs, by skilfully handling the bushel measure. She had been educated at the convent of the Sacré-Cœur, in company with the titled offspring of the Faubourg Saint Germain, where she learned to dance, to play the piano, to make a curtsy, and to lower her eyelids. The father marvelling at his daughter's perfections, gave her a dowry in accordance with his enthusiasm. He rigged her out, on the wedding-day, with a couple of thousand pounds a year: half in gas shares, and half in the omnibus de Paris; but with a proper care of his daughter's wardrobe, he stipulated that the bride should have an annual allowance of eight hundred pounds a year, for the little elegant expenses which are defrayed by what is called pin-money.

The husband punctually fulfilled his engage-

ment. On the first day of the second three months, he scrupulously gave her the quarter's pin-money. The marquise conscientiously spent it, with the delight of an emancipated school-girl who feels a bank-note burn her fingers until she has got rid of it in some foolish outlay. In the morning, at the breakfast hour, she made her first appearance in a white Indian cashmere dress, embroidered with blue flowers, lined with satin, slightly open in front to allow a glimpse of a Valenciennes petticoat trimmed with ribbons—a trifle of some eighty pounds.

"How do you like this robe de chambre?" she would say to her husband.

The marquis would cast a sidelong glance at madame, and bluntly answer, "Perfect." And, as he was always hungry in the morning, he would valiantly attack a slice of pie-crust.

"I put it on, on *your* account," the young wife continued, accompanying the *your* with one of those lingering looks which seem to promise eternity of happiness.

"My wife is decidedly fond of me," thought the husband.

At one o'clock in the afternoon the marquise reappeared on the horizon with a change of decoration. This time, she wore a toilette de Bois, that is, a dress in which to appear at the Bois de Boulogne: a grey velvet dress, with manteau of the same, both trimmed with sable fur—the whole estimated at one hundred and sixty pounds, at the lowest farthing. She first offered her husband her forehead to kiss; then, resting her two arms on his chest, and looking at him from head to foot, in a sort of ecstasy: "You have again forgotten to compliment me," said she, in a caressing tone of reproach.

"About what, madame?"

She abruptly stepped a yard or two back, and taking her dress in both hands, as if she were dancing, "About this," she replied. "Ingrate that you are, it is again for your sake!"

"Delicious!" the husband answered. And then he added, mentally, "I might safely state that my wife grows more and more affectionate every minute."

The dinner hour arrived; but madame first underwent her third moult, and put on a dress embroidered, in colours, at the bottom, with bouquets of corn-flowers and poppies, interspersed with ears of corn, fastened by azure ribbon, so abundant and rustling that it could be heard, behind the scenes, approaching from the next room. This last fancy, however, had cost only one bank-note. The husband thought he would have his revenge, and without awaiting any fresh provocation to compliment, "Divine!" he exclaimed, as he beheld his wife enter the dining-room in her third transformation.

"What nonsense are you talking, my dear?" she sulkily answered. "The dress is a complete failure, a frightful dress; frightful in cut, and frightful in colour. The blue and the red give you the idea of fireworks. In the shop-window it had a tolerable effect, but on me, it makes me look a year older. I am really ashamed to appear in it before you."

"The good intention is sufficient."

"By no means, monsieur; the action ought to correspond. I will send this bunch of rags to my dressmaker to-morrow; she may do with it whatever she pleases."

She ate her dinner ill humouredly. When the dessert was served, she left the table to put on a ball-dress to go to a *soirée dansante* at the Minister of State's; shirt of white tulle covered with a golden network, from each of whose meshes protruded a puff of blonde, with a golden star at the tip of each puff—a fairy robe, with quillings of blonde—an item of one hundred and sixty pounds added to the milliner's bill.

"It seems, then, that I am married to four different women," thought the husband, sorrowfully, as he accompanied his wife to the square of the Carrousel.

He regularly paid the second, third, and last instalment of madame's private expenses; but, lo, at the end of the year, the milliner presented to the marquis a supplementary bill of two thousand and eighty pounds for unforeseen outlay on dress! The marquis began by turning the milliner out of the house; but, upon reflection, he called her back, and obediently paid the bill. He added, however, a marginal note, to the effect that it was the last bill of the kind he would pay. One item, especially, made him shudder; a parasol was set down at twelve pounds. As if a parasol of that price had ever existed under the sun!

The sacrifice once consummated, the marquis, without giving any cause for scandal, without any scolding, but, on the contrary, kindly although firmly, entreated his wife to have the goodness to confine her elegances within the bounds of her credits. She listened to him quietly; she regarded him with an air of astonishment: then, as if yielding to an internal impulse, she threw her arms round her husband's neck, and, enveloping him with the totality of her affection, stifling him in the embrace of her passion, she sobbed, she wept, and begged his pardon. "It was all done to please you," she said. "This folly was committed through the coquetry of love and in its intoxication. It shall be the last; I swear it by your honour, on this sacred altar," she added, laying her hand on his heart.

A lingering ray of the honeymoon still shone on the tearful countenance of this Magdalen of dress. All was pardoned, all was forgotten, and the treaty of peace was sealed by an exchange of signatures on the cheek of the wife and the cheek of the husband.

And, nevertheless, Madame la Marquise became more and more splendid, and underwent continual transfigurations from one hour of the day to another. But at the end of the year, the milliner, implacable as Destiny, returned to put in the husband's hands a fresh account of four thousand pounds: which included several sums advanced for the purchase of a screen, and the trimmings of some drawing-room furniture.

The last quarter of the honeymoon had disappeared from the conjugal firmament. The marquis flatly refused to acknowledge this under-

hand supply, illegally furnished without his knowledge or consent. The milliner summoned the refractory husband before the Tribunal de Première Instance. The judge, to set a good example, nonsuited the plaintiff.

After this domestic coup d'état, Madame la Marquise sulks at her husband. She does not weep: she never breaks out. She only maintains a savage silence. She has covered her countenance with a marble mask. When her husband speaks, she appears not to hear him. When he asks a question, she answers Yes or No indifferently; she uses and abuses the terrible eloquence of the monosyllable. When he wishes to take her out for a walk or a drive, she has a headache; when he wants to go into the country, she is suffering from gastralgia—she is dying, she demands to die in peace. Finally, if her husband enjoys any dish at dinner, she affects never to partake of it.

Sometimes, while sitting opposite to this dumb woman, or rather this white insensible shadow of a woman—this statue petrified with vexation—the husband, boiling over with impatience, strikes the table with his fist, and shouts, in a fit of delirium, "But speak, madame; rail at me, call me a monster, fire a pistol at me, do anything—make a gesture, a movement, to prove that I have a living woman before me, and not a phantom!"

The wife languishingly raises her head, and smiles bitterly at this address. She is too well aware of the power of passive resistance to have any intention of changing her tactics.

She continues to die; she keeps her bed for half the week, and receives visits there, with the bed-clothes turned back very far, in order to display to her intimate enemies (called acquaintances), an embroidered chemise, an embroidered under-waistcoat, an embroidered pillow-case, an embroidered counterpane, and finally an embroidered sheet, with a marquise's coronet in the corner.

Then, all at once, under the pretence that the doctor had advised her to take exercise, she would keep out of doors and away from home for half the day.

One evening, when, with flushed cheeks, she returned to her own room, she cast a look of triumph in the glass, and hastily threw back her burnous, as if to give more air to her chest. "At last, I am avenged," she said. What did she mean by that? Nobody ever knew exactly. There was some talk at the time about a small-sword wound which her husband received in the Bois de Meudon. Ever since that day, he has resumed his agricultural pursuits on his Châlosse estate. The last news of him, was, that he had gained the prize for Durham oxen.

Who would believe that in Paris, in France, where political earthquakes are continually causing fortunes to totter, where the equal division of property soon pulverises the largest inheritance, there should be mothers of families so devoid of prudence as to carry about upon their persons something like a couple of thousand pounds' worth of finery, swallowing up their

daughters' dowry, and perhaps even their children's bread? It causes a wife to be regarded as a curiosity, costing such an extravagant price that a reasonable man must contrive to do without it. And what do they do at the end of a month with all these three-or-four-thousand-franc dresses, which they wear three or four times? They sell them to dealers in second-hand clothes for fifty or sixty francs apiece, and the cast-off finery makes a rapid descent to embellish, perhaps to demoralise, lower members of the social scale.

A PROVINCIAL POST-OFFICE.

THERE is this difference between receiving an official installation into any situation, and being born to it, that while the former is merely the work-a-day service of life, the latter is so lit up with all the associations of childhood and youth, that the most matter-of-fact business becomes invested with something of the interest and prestige of a birthright. Thus postal service is almost an inheritance to us; for my earliest recollections are connected with the daily routine of office-work, carried on in the room which was partly devoted to nursery employments and amusements. Postal arrangements in the country, so long since as 1827, were of the most primitive order; and it was considered sufficiently official, and convenient enough for the public, if the postmaster provided in any ordinary sitting-room a counter on which to sort and stamp the letters; a letter-box, with a slide opening into the street; and a wooden pane in his window, with a door in it through which inquiries could be made. Gazing through this little door, with childishly wondering eyes, upon the marvellous panorama and procession of the outside world; sitting half-frightened upon the counter, while my nurse stamped my arms and forehead with talismanic impressions of the name of my native town, to secure me from gipsies and other baby-stealers, who were the terror of our infancy; threats, when I was troublesome, of being tied and sealed up in the large London bag, and delivered over to the mercy of the clerks there, whom I confounded with the cannibals I heard my elder brothers talking about; these are the most vivid recollections of my first years. Visions there are, too, faint but stirring, of a daily levee at noon upon the arrival of the London mail of the day before, when the privileged squire of those times, a grand old colonel of dragoons, whose costume was a bright green coat with brass buttons, and huge white-topped boots, invaded the forbidden precincts of the office itself, and installing himself in the rocking-chair, read his Times at leisure; while the letters were sorted by almost children's hands, amid laughter, frolic, and coquettish jests through the window, besieged by an eager crowd without.

I suppose our office was a fair type of other country-offices. We were one hundred and forty miles from London, in a midland county, of which our town was the second for size and im-

portance. It was the centre of a postal district of about forty miles in circuit, containing one hundred and seventy-two villages and hamlets, with a considerable portion of a coal and iron country thickly populated; yet the average number of letters received and despatched weekly, before the establishment of the penny post, was only five hundred. The postage upon these varied according to distance, from fourpence to our county-town, which was eleven miles off (a moderate walk), to one shilling and fourpence-halfpenny to the extreme north of Scotland; the odd halfpenny being charged on every Scotch letter, as a toll for passing across a bridge over the Tweed. Throughout all our wide district there were no sub-offices, and the distribution of rural letters was a private concern; letter-carriers not then being servants of the crown. One villanous old letter-carrier whom I remember, was a drunken, surly, dishonest scoundrel, and who used to carry the letters away from the office to a wretched den of his own, where we sometimes saw him sorting them on the floor, while he growled and snarled over them, like a dog over a heap of unsatisfactory bones. Letters destined for any distance from the town were always laid aside till a sufficient number for the same locality were accumulated to make it worth while to convey them, at the charge of a penny a mile each letter. In those times a postman's place was a lucrative and leisurely one; and I dimly recollect a very fat letter-carrier, who was quite portly and majestic in his demeanour. And I can recall cases of almost tragic interest, when letters written in great trouble and anguish—perhaps a summons to a death-bed, or a circumstance that demanded immediate attention—did not reach the persons addressed until days after the crisis must be over; or even lay at the post-office for weeks, unknown of, and unguessed at, until some chance messenger happened to call and inquire for them. Country agents, and gentlemen who did not have private bags, were compelled to make it part of the regular business of the day to ride into the town, though at a distance of six or eight miles, to ascertain if any correspondence had arrived for them.

It was the time of "expresses" in my childhood—that clumsy arrangement for the swift transmission of intelligence—clumsy, I mean, in comparison with the playful flash of electric wires. A special messenger, termed an express, could be procured at a post-office, and despatched officially with a single letter, and a way-bill to check the time at the charge of a shilling, and at the speed of ten miles an hour. By some fortuitous circumstance, these expresses always seemed to arrive in the dead of the night, when the quietness of the quiet town was deepened into a solemn stillness. There would be the sudden trampling and ringing of hoof-beats through the narrow streets; the thundering of a volley of hurried blows upon our fastened door; the shrill cry under the window of "Haste, post haste!" the sound of the sashes thrown up, and casements flung

open on every side; an instantaneous tumult and agitation in a sleepful house. Once the dread solitary letter, sent express from Surrey, was for a young student dwelling at the house opposite our own, who was leaning through his window, when he heard his own name shouted by the messenger, and answered it by a wild and bitter cry, which long rang in our ears, as he was thus called up from his deep sleep to receive the message of death from home. On another occasion, the express came with a letter to be forwarded at one o'clock in the morning, and as no mounted messenger could be procured at that untimely hour, the postmaster was compelled to start with it himself, and walk several miles to the nearest main road, in the hope of a night-coach overtaking him, and carrying him on to the next post-office. For the purpose of conveying government despatches to Dublin, expresses were kept always in readiness for instant departure at all the posting-houses between London and Holyhead. At this moment I have a vivid vision of that bit of the old Holyhead road running along the narrow strip of coast which lies between the once sea-swept rocks of Caernarvon, and the tides of the Irish sea. As I saw it last summer, when walking from Conway to Penmaenmaur, it was romantic, and beautiful, and exquisitely pleasurable; a long, lone, deserted high road, leading beside great mountains and under overhanging precipices, with so narrow a compass from the sea, that while we trod upon the spur of the hills on our left hand, the waves boomed sullenly against the rugged foundations of the wall upon our right. Pleasant enough for us in the summer sunshine to lean idly over the wall, and look down upon the play of the foam upon the crags below, and listen, spell-bound, to the liquid splashing of the water. But what of the dreadful darkness of an utterly unlighted night; of the furious raging of the invisible ocean—invisible, or seen only by the gleam of its storm-tossed surge; of the ghostly roar of the wind tearing through the black ravines of the hills, and rushing down them with the fierce strength of a wrestler; of the biting rain and sleet, pelting piteously upon the blinded eyes, and uncovered face, and benumbed limbs, which could not be sheltered during the furious riding? Fancy all these; and the express braving and daring them all, as he flies through the storm and the darkness!

A few weeks since I had to describe to a circle of wondering children what a mail-coach was like—that glory of my own childhood. I see again the quiet drowsy street of twenty years ago; the old-fashioned shops; the tinman's cellar, echoing noisily with the jingling of the sonorous metal; the half-timbered inn, with its creaking sign, and Pickford's cumbrous waggon standing at the door; and this rider for whom we are watching, Sam the post-boy, trotting leisurely up the street on his slow pony, with our letter-bags, only four in number, and very little ones, slung across his saddle, like panniers. Our town lies about a mile from the great arterial Roman road, the Watling-street; and

the mails in their dignity of importance and haste, as they speed on to Holyhead or London, cannot be delayed by deviating from their straight course to run through our insignificant streets. But at times when a letter has been forgotten, or an important packet arrives too late, a band of us, boys and girls—and I have often wondered since how much of this world's work is done, and made play of, by children like ourselves—scamper joyously along the moonlit lanes, to meet the ten o'clock mail to London, and see if there be still time to open the bag, and re-seal it with the government seal, which we carry with us as the badge of our authority. How we pause together under the broad, smooth, bare arms of the beeches, while Lancaster—dear, dead Lancaster—whose brain is filled with Indian devices, lays his ear to the ground to listen. Beside us is the flashing of flitting lights in the posting-house; the pawing of expectant horses; and the laughter and talk of the ostlers in the stable-yard. The sound we hear—a very faint, fitful rolling sound—is the rattle of the wheels upon the frost-bound road three miles away; the mail is still a quarter of an hour distant, and while our authorised clerk executes her commission, we children stand aside, hearkening breathlessly to this ever-growing pace, which stirs our young hearts uneasily, with a thrill as of some terrible and inevitable fate, sweeping irresistibly towards us. A quarter of a mile away, and there are the sharp piercing notes of a bugle, “setting the wild echoes flying;” and at the signal the house starts into quicker life. The pawing horses are brought out, beautiful in their eagerness and impatience; the lanterns of the ostlers form a galaxy of flitting lights, and perhaps a traveller, uncertain whether he can proceed on his journey, for this is a roadside posting-house, watches anxiously for the red glare of the lamps under the arching boughs of the beeches. The coachman condescends to take some little interest in the three passengers allowed to him; but the guard looks down with the composure of a felt superiority. Those great bags piled upon the roof, which have accumulated on the long route from Holyhead; his locked and solitary seat, into the recesses of which he carelessly drops our little addition to the load; the shining holster of the blunderbuss, ready to his hand, as if he might want it at any moment; these are the cares and responsibilities which give an extraordinary sense of dignity to his isolation from common duties. But when the mail dashes on furiously, as if frantic with the short delay of eighty seconds, and there is no slackening of its headlong pace up the hill under the vicarage walls, we are amazed at the mingled nonchalance and sensibility with which he sends ringing through the frosty air the melody of “The Green Hills of Tyrol;” no ranting, vulgar, worn-out street tunes for him; there is music, and the romance of music in his soul. “Ah! what difference ’twixt now and then!” When the railway was first opened we used to run down to the station to see the mail-train come in; more especially

when a travelling post-office, with a staff of clerks, accompanied it. But these clerks, common objects now at any railway station, who always look so remarkably dingy and unshaven, as well as so remarkably busy, are no more to be compared in gentility and exalted dignity of deportment to our royal liveried guard, than the shrill scream of the whistle to the sweet, clear notes of the key-bugle.

Before 1840, two letter-carriers, of the stamp of the villanous old Perry and his fat comrade, distributed the letters of our town, and its district of forty miles, very much at their own discretion; in 1862, fifty-nine persons, as sub-postmasters, rural messengers, and letter-carriers, were engaged upon nearly the same ground, in transmitting and delivering letters free through every village and hamlet. Then, in a room, half nursery, the light work occupied one person for about two hours daily; now three clerks, no longer children, are required to transact the business of the same office. The five hundred letters received and despatched weekly have multiplied into fifteen thousand; with the addition of two thousand five hundred newspapers, and three hundred and fifty book-parcels; while instead of five bags daily, thirty-four are made up and despatched in all directions. Now, almost the hour at which a letter is posted is indicated by the date-stamp; but I have before me the cover of an old letter, with the usual words "Single, Speed" written upon it, which bears no stamp whatever by which to check the time of its delivery with the date of its despatch. The official surveillance has grown vigorous; formerly the surveyor sent courteous intimation of his visits some days beforehand, that everything might be in order; but now, he, or any one of his numerous assistants, may enter the office at any moment, and institute a rigid examination of all the details of its work. This old money-order desk, too, ink-stained as a schoolboy's, has done its duty through all the changes of that branch of the service by which fifteen millions of money is now transmitted annually through the United Kingdom. An old yellow-leaved penny memorandum-book is the representative of the great ledgers of to-day; the entries in it numbering about five weekly, and the commission charged being eightpence in the pound, with a stamp-duty of one shilling if the sum exceeded two pounds. Until the money-order business ceased to be a monopoly, and was incorporated with the Post-office in 1838, the whole cost of forwarding one pound by money-order from this town to London, was no less than two-and-fourpence; the enclosure of the order in the letter involving a double charge upon the latter, as only one sheet could be sent for a single postage.

I must own that in all country places there is an instinctive suspicion and doubt of the post-office. Sir Walter Scott's type of an inquisitive post-mistress, with her two gossips, holding a letter up before the light, is still the prevailing opinion about us; and, in fact, while looking over a number of old Postal Circulars, a

paper which is sent every week to each office, I find that in most instances of dismissal for "tampering with letters" the offender is a post-mistress, or a female employée. Even ourselves, when some of us resided at a distance, began to fancy there was too great an interest in our private affairs indulged in at the village post-office; and we were wont to examine our seals jealously. I knew a child, whose father was a postmaster, say to some ladies, expressing their anxiety to see what was in a letter to their brother, "Oh, Miss Emma! you just warm a knife, not too hot, and put it under a seal, and it'll open of itself." The misgiving is not altogether without foundation. A great deal can be known from the outside of a letter, where there is no disposition to pry into the enclosure. Who would not be almost satisfied with knowing all the correspondence coming to or leaving the hands of the object of his interest? From our long training among the letters of our district, we knew the handwriting of most persons so intimately, that no attempt at disguise, however cunningly executed, could succeed with us. We noticed the ominous lawyers' letters addressed to tradesmen whose circumstances were growing embarrassed; and we saw the carefully ill-written direction to the street in Liverpool and London, where some poor fugitive debtor was in hiding. The evangelical curate, who wrote in a disguised hand and under an assumed name to the fascinating public singer, did not deceive us; the young man, who posted a circular love-letter to three or four girls the same night, never escaped our notice; the wary maiden, prudently keeping two strings to her bow, unconsciously depended upon our good faith. The public never know how much they owe to official secrecy and official honour, and how rarely this confidence is betrayed. Petty tricks and artifices, small dishonesties, histories of tyranny and suffering, exaggerations, and disappointments, were thrust upon our notice. As if we were the official confidants of the neighbourhood, we were acquainted with the leading events in the lives of most of the inhabitants.

For the poor we were often persuaded both to read and write their letters; and the Irish especially, with whom penmanship was a rare accomplishment, seldom failed to succeed in their eloquent petitions; though no one can realise the difficulty of writing from a Paddy's dictation, where "the pratees, and the pig, and the praiste, God bless him!" become involved in one long, perplexed sentence, without any period from beginning to end of the letter. One such epistle, the main topic of which was an extravagant lamentation over the death of a wife, rose to the pathetic climax, "and now I'm obleeged to wash meself, and bake meself!" The letters of the English poor, on the contrary, were composed of short, bald sentences; except in the case of the miners in our neighbourhood, who generally looked to us to conduct their correspondence with their sweethearts, during the yearly absence of the latter in

the strawberry gardens round London. It was no unusual circumstance for them to offer large premiums, as much as sixpence a verse, if we would put in "a bit of poetry," which pleased them equally well whether it was taken, with some slight alteration, from Wesley's Hymns or Shenstone's Poems. But most frequently the cases brought to us were sorrowful ones, in which we could render no help.

One day a poor woman, who received a quarterly allowance through our office from the relieving-officer of her father's parish, came to us half broken-hearted because her landlord, a wealthy and titled gentleman, insisted upon her sending her father to the workhouse—a blind, paralytic, and childish old man, whom she had to tend like an infant—as he had made it a rule upon his estate that no "lodgers" should be kept by any of his tenants. The woman felt, as any other tender true-hearted daughter would feel; and she had a vague notion, a common one among the poor, that if the Queen could only know her wrongs, she would remove them. Another time, a destitute, depressed looking girl came to ask how much it would cost to send a piece of her mother's shroud to her brother in Australia, as a sure token, she said, weeping, that he would see her face no more. Fancy the mail steamer freighted—for to us and the orphan it bore no other burden—with a shroud of a mother's shroud, crossing those thousands of miles of ocean to bear testimony to a wider and more impassable separation. One more story of the poor, with whom we were necessarily brought into contact, and whose gratitude for very trivial kindnesses, as with Wordsworth, "has often left us mourning." At the time of the Crimean war, we were directed to fasten a small pamphlet, containing a list of the killed and wounded, upon the outside of our office window, where every one could turn over the doom-written leaves. Strange were the faces, hard-featured, homely, weather-beaten faces of working men and women, who clustered round it from morning to night, and read aloud, with slow and laboured effort, the names of our lost soldiers in the East, proclaiming them in our ears with a mournfully monotonous tone, until the list grew familiar to us as our own registered names in the family Bible. Now and then there would be a murmur and thrill of recognition as the hesitating voice of the reader pronounced some name in the list of privates; and once a poor washerwoman, who had set down her basket for a minute to hear about the war, was greeted with the name of her son as one among the dead. She uttered one sharp cry, and then knocked at the office window, and stood face to face with us, the tears streaming down her wrinkled face.

"It's my son!" she cried.

"Is he in the list?" we asked.

"It's my son, my son!" she repeated. She could say no more; and, after a few minutes' weeping, as if there were no more time for sorrow, she passed on to her work, to the blessed necessity of labour.

But the incidents of our office life were often

of an amusing character. Sometimes ladies who made their christian names as much a mystery as their age, seemed to regard it as a personal insult to be required to mention them. About two or three years ago, when the slips called money-order applications were issued free to the public, an idea spread abroad that the money orders themselves would be granted upon payment merely of the commission, and we had quite a run of demands for free orders; most of them being to defray milliners' bills of long standing. A tradesman, whom we knew to be almost insolvent, came on a Sunday morning for a pound's-worth of postage stamps; and, upon their being handed over to him, and payment demanded, replied, with sanctimonious gravity, that he had not brought the money, as he thought "the post-master might have a scruple against being paid on a Sabbath!" We were, of course, compelled to decline transacting Sunday post-office business on such conscientious terms.

Now and then came brief snatches of romance; romances that were never finished. Once our interest was keenly excited by a fair young face presented daily at the office window. A frank face, with a childlike, guileless smile in the dark eyes and upon the rosy lips. We were skilful at "back-speering," as the Scotch call it, and we soon ascertained, without awakening any suspicion, that Miss Columbello was residing with a family in the town, under another name, and with a rather fabulous history. Her mother had been a laundress in a baronet's household; and this girl, lovely enough to turn any young man's head, had been married clandestinely to the second son; the concealed marriage only being confessed when the young officer's regiment was ordered to the West Indies. His parents, after some natural anger, determined to make the best of the circumstances, and proposed that their laundress's daughter should remain in England during her husband's absence, and reside with a former governess, in order to receive an education in some degree befitting her new position. So far the story was true; but the stranger continued her romance by narrating almost incredible cruelties and indignities practised upon her after her husband's departure, which had at last compelled her to fly in secrecy from the home where he had left her, and seek a refuge from her persecutors at a safe distance. After this we watched more keenly the open, ingenuous face, which would have betrayed any physiognomist into admiration, when she asked smilingly for her secret letters. Even her present correspondent she deceived, for, after she had left the town, she forwarded letters from herself to him, to be posted at our office,—a practice which has since been prohibited, as only contributing to purposes of deception. One of these letters, sent to us open, contained a flower or two, which she said had been gathered in our neighbourhood. We had almost forgotten her, when one day two gentlemen and a policeman called at our office in prosecution of a search after the fugitive, who had left no trace of her destination with

the friends she had been visiting. One of the gentlemen, frantic with anxiety, and apparently just recovered from a severe illness, was the husband, returned, after two years' absence, to find all clue to his young wife lost. Never shall we forget the eagerness with which he received the address of the letters forwarded by us, though we had ascertained that it was only to some offices in London. Whether he ever found her, we never knew.

Another crisis in a life's history we saw finished. A tradesman's daughter, who had been for some time engaged to a prosperous young draper in a neighbouring town, heard from one whom she and her parents considered credible authority, that he was on the verge of bankruptcy. Not a day was to be lost in breaking the bond, by which she and her small fortune were linked to poverty. A letter, strong and conclusive in its language, was at once written and safely deposited in the post-office, when the same informant called upon the young lady's friends to contradict and explain his previous statement, which had arisen out of some misunderstanding. They rushed to us at once, and no words can describe the scene; the reiterated appeals, the tears, the wringing of hands, the united entreaties of father, mother, and daughter, for us to restore their fatal letter. But the rule admitted of no exceptions—that a letter once posted could not be restored to any applicant; not even to the writer himself. It was but in the next room, this fatal epistle, and nothing but a formal but most essential rule stood between them and their rejected prospects. The circumstance was not of any lasting importance, however. Each lover married somebody else, and was, no doubt, quite as happy.

Never, surely, has any one a better chance of seeing himself as others see him than a country postmaster. Letters of complaint very securely enveloped and sealed passed through our hands, addressed to the Postmaster-General, and then came back to us for our own perusal and explanation. One of our neighbours informed the Postmaster-General, in confidence, that we were "ignorant and stupid." A clergyman wrote a pathetic remonstrance, stating that he was so often disappointed of his Morning Star and Dial, that he had come to the conclusion that we disapproved of that paper for the clergy; and from scruples of conscience, or political motives, prevented it—one of four hundred passing daily through our office—from reaching his hands whenever there was anything we considered objectionable in it. Two characteristics marked every complaint; the extreme regret of the British public at being compelled, after much long-suffering, to find fault, and the serious importance of every letter lost or mis-sent, among the hundred thousands circulating in all directions each day. In our own "dead-letter" bag about twelve a day were sent up to London, from our inability to discover the persons to whom they had been written. In 1859, the number of letters returned to the writers from the dead-letter

office was one million nine hundred thousand; nearly half of them being insufficiently or incorrectly addressed; and more than eleven thousand posted with no direction at all. From the same causes four hundred and seventy thousand newspapers were undelivered.

It is as little understood with what zeal and honourable enthusiasm a great deal of the post-office service is performed, as it is considered how important and necessary it is that this public duty should be transacted upon higher principles than those entering into ordinary business. When the Violet mail-packet between Ostend and Dover was lost in 1856, the officer in charge, seeing that the vessel could not be saved, must have spent the last minutes of his life in removing the cases which contained the mail-bags, and so placing them that they floated, when the ship and its crew went down. On another occasion, the mail-master of a Canadian steamer sacrificed his life, when he might have escaped, by going below to secure the mails entrusted to him. I know among our own little staff of servants, hard-worked and underpaid, there is no deficiency of a laudable desire to do their work with spirit and exactness. "They shall press me into the earth," said one of our rural messengers, referring to the unreasonable demands of the public, "but I will do my duty!" On our own parts, how often have we done, what every official in the public service has to do, steadily turned away from our domestic interests, whether of joy or sorrow, and bent our minds from them into a diligent attendance upon the responsibilities devolving upon us.

SOME CURIOUS LIGHTS.

At the end of the sixteenth century a certain old Vincenzo Cascariolo, of Bologna, cobbler by profession, alchemist by practice, went out one summer Sunday evening to take a walk as far as the Monte Paterno. On his way thither, peering about to see if he could not find some sort of key, no matter what, which should unlock the great gate leading into the illimitable gold-fields of Nature, he picked up a stone—a stone like any other stone to look at, but something heavier in the hand to feel. A thought struck him. Always on the look-out for the universal solvent, the alkahest, the menstruum which should turn his copper to gold, and raise his cobbler's lapstone to a patrician's emblem, it suddenly occurred to him that, as this stone had one of the properties of gold, namely, its weight, it might be found on investigation to contain the body of gold itself, and to be one of the links in the chain sought to be knit up. He went back to his furnaces and his awls, put his stone into a crucible, and calcined it; but he got no gold; only a body "which absorbs the rays of the sun by day to emit them by night." In other words, he had made the famous phosphorescent Bologna stone, the Lapis solaris of old days, scientifically known in these days as the

sulphuret of barium; that is, sulphate of barytes, or heavy-spar after calcination. Scipio Begatello, the alchemist, also of Bologna, had a bit of this light-bearing marvel brought to him by the old cobbler; this *Lapis solaris*, which was heavy as gold, attracted the sun, and shone like the sun in the dark, and was thus evidently bound up with the Sol of the fraternity: which Sol was also gold. The cobbler showed it to some others; so that the fame of the Bologna stone got spread abroad, and was made one of the wonders of the old city. This was in 1602, and is the history of the Bologna stone as discovered by Cascariolo the cobbler, and detailed by Dr. Phipson, in his charming little volume on Phosphorescence, lately published. Years afterwards, Marggraf made some pretty bright things by pulverising barytine and mixing it up into a paste with flour in the form of stars, or what form soever he chose to employ, then heating the stars in a closed crucible: which stars, if exposed to the sun for a short time after, would light up in the dark with marvellous radiance and brightness.

In 1663, Robert Boyle, "the father of English chemistry, and uncle of the Earl of Cork," going his way towards knowledge and the future, found that the diamond was phosphorescent after being exposed to the rays of the sun. In 1675, Baudoin got a new phosphorus out of calcined nitrate of lime. Nearly a hundred years later, Canton's phosphorus—three parts of calcined oyster-shells with one of sulphur—was shown before the Royal Society of London under various very lovely experiments. Plaster of Paris, calcined with common charcoal, and exposed to the sun, is also phosphorescent; and walls lately whitewashed may be seen shining with a steady glow-worm light after exposure to the burning rays of a summer sun. Indeed, many mineral substances are of the light-bearing tribe. Among them some varieties of fluor-spar, carbonate of lime, burnt oyster-shells, pearls, phosphate and arseniate of lime, some diamonds, and the beautiful variety of fluor-spar known as chlorophane, which, when of the noblest kind, is luminous in the dark by the mere heat of the hand—of a lower order of merit, at good warm summer heat, say from sixty to eighty Fahrenheit.

Electricity and heat have both much to do with creating phosphorescence. A slight shock passed through an exhausted substance, or even exposure to the electric light, will restore the light that has departed; and heat is one of the prime agents. Fluor-spar, lime, sulphuret of calcium, diamonds, &c., pulverised and thrown on a heated surface become brilliantly luminous; fluor-spar the most so. Thrown on to heated mercury, into boiling water, or on a hot shovel, it becomes exceedingly bright. But there is one curious thing about it. A perfect crystal of fluor-spar will not become phosphorescent by heat alone, unless one surface be slightly roughened on sandstone: diamonds, on the contrary, will not become phosphorescent unless perfectly polished. Certain diamonds, which will not shine by heat alone, will by electricity; cer-

tain non-phosphorescent bodies can be made luminous by heat, if previously electrified. Of these, are some marbles, apatites, and others of the same class. When exposed to the light they lose this quality, but retain it if kept in the dark. Metallic arsenic, and native sulphuret of antimony (stibine, not antimony pure), become phosphoric when heated to a dull red heat, and shine with a yellow-white light. Gold, copper, and silver, are all phosphorescent when melted on charcoal; so is the mineral called lepidolite; so is sulphate of quinine, and sulphate of cinchonine—also by heat but not by exposure to light; so is paper. Common salt is phosphorescent at a great heat: and chloride of calcium, that has been melted and then rubbed, glows with a greenish light. This is called Hornberg's phosphorus, because first observed by him. The crystals of nitrate of uranium are strikingly luminous when shaken up in a bottle; and many crystals give out light at their point of cleavage. When mica is broken, a spark flashes out, and the separated plates are found to be electric: one positive and the other negative. So it is with feld-spar. Boracic acid, melted in a crucible and then cooled, splits as it cools and sends out faint flames; when vanadic acid is melted, it also crystallises in cooling: the crystals glowing with a red phosphoric light. Vanadium, whence the acid, is a white metal, a kind of underdone silver, found in 1830 by Sefström, the Swedish chemist, in a certain soft iron remarkable for its ductility; and called by him after some heathenish old Scandinavian idol, unknown to general fame. So also, when phosphate of lime is melted, it cools into phosphorescent crystalline beads, very beautiful to behold. Transparent feld-spar is luminous when pounded; so is sugar, which makes quite a grand display when pounded rapidly in a mortar in the dark, until the whole mass seems to be a small sea of flame. So says Dr. Phipson. By practical experiment, I, the compiler of this paper, know nothing.

Water freezing very rapidly, gives out sparks at the moment of passing from water to ice. This was a discovery made by Professor Pontus in 1833. Blend, with very slight excitement; quartz, giving when rubbed the odour of ozone; flint, borax, sugar, sulphur, are all luminous when slightly rubbed in the dark; but the most phosphoric of all substances is phosphorus itself, which is luminous at any temperature above zero. Below that, its light is put out. Phosphorus can make six hundred thousand parts of spirits of wine luminous with one part of itself, and gives light to water in which it is kept. Sulphuret of calcium thrown into water, sends off bubbles of phosphuretted hydrogen gas, which take fire in the atmosphere and give off rings of white smoke, beautifully luminous, and making an exceedingly lovely experiment. Potassium is luminous when first exposed to the air. M. Petrie covered a stick with beeswax, then cut it in two parts, and each segment was phosphorescent when cut. Potassium has a reddish light, but burns with a purple flame in water;

sodium is greenish when newly cut, and at sixty or seventy degrees centigrade is just as intensely luminous as phosphorus. Each substance has its own light, though the typical light of phosphorescence is the greenish yellow of the glow-worm. Some marbles and amber give a golden yellow shine; some specimens of fluor-spar arseniate of lime and chloride of calcium are greenish; other fluor-spars are blue violet; chlorophane is green; the shine of the Oriental garnet is reddish; harmotome or crossstone (zeolite) is green-yellow; dolomite, a white marble or magnesian carbonate of lime, aragonite, and some diamonds give a white light; oxide of zinc is blue, and copper a green-yellow, like a glow-worm.

Some of the gases are phosphorescent. If rarefied oxygen be put into a chain of glass globes, and a stream of electricity passed through, all the globes become illuminated if the stream is suddenly cut off. Sulphurous acid gas is also a light-bearer; and mercury can be played off with marvellous effect of fiery mimic rain and softly-falling glowing snow, when acted on by the atmosphere in an exhausted receiver.

There are many accounts of luminous rain and snow and fog. M. de Saussure, travelling on the summit of the Breven in the midst of a storm, felt a strange creeping sensation in his fingers when he raised his hand, and in a short time saw that the rain was luminous, and that an electric spark was drawn from a gold button in his companion's hat. On the 25th of January, 1822, M. de Thielaw, on his way to Freyburg during a heavy fall of snow, saw that the branches of the trees glowed with a bluish light, and on the same day the Freyburg miners noticed that a shower of sleet which fell there was luminous when it struck the earth. On the 3rd of June, 1731, one Hallai, a priest near Constance, saw a rain which glowed like red-hot liquid metal. This was during a thunder-storm; and in 1761 Bergman wrote to the Royal Society of London, concerning a luminous rain which sparkled as it fell, and covered the earth with waves of fire. On the 3rd of May, 1768, M. Pasumot was overtaken by a violent storm, when on an open plain near Arnay-le-Duc; when he shook off the rain which had collected on the brim of his hat, it was luminous and sparkled as it fell. There are many records of luminous mists. The luminous fog of 1783, the year of the great Calabrian earthquake, is a well-known historical fact. It was a dry fog which spread from the North of Africa up to Sweden, passing over North America too, which rose higher than the highest mountains, and was dispersed by neither wind nor rain. It was so luminous that things could be plainly seen at six hundred yards' distance at night, giving as much light as the moon when behind a cloud; it had an evil smell; and in the same year came the disastrous earthquake of Calabria, and many of the most remarkable eruptions of Mount Hecla. There was another luminous fog in 1831, when whole nights were so light that the smallest print could be read at midnight, in Italy and the north

of Germany; and again in 1859, reported to M. Elie de Beaumont by M. Wartmann of Geneva, and which was so bright, he said, that he could distinguish things on his table. Again, one in 1861, just before the great comet which came so unexpectedly: the fog was in the day and the comet appeared at night. Had we passed through its tail unawares? Luminous zones of cloud have been often noticed. Beccaria reports one at Turin, which cast such a strong reddish glare that ordinary print could be read by it; and General Sabine saw a permanent luminous cloud—a cloud by day, but a pillar of fire by night—resting on the top of one of the mountains round Loch Seavig in the Isle of Skye. It was not only self-illuminated at night, but also gave out frequent jets of phosphoric light, which was not the Aurora Borealis. In July, 1797, a shining cloud first red and then blue, was observed during a storm; though these luminous zones are more generally observed in winter between successive falls of snow. Of the same class of phenomena is that faint diffused light which Arago notices as to be seen in autumn and winter, even in cloudy, moonless, starless nights, and with no snow on the ground. There is always a little light in the atmosphere, a phosphorescence gathered from the sun during the day, which perhaps accounts for the saying, "the darkest hour is the hour before dawn;" as that is the moment of longest exposure, and consequently of greatest weakness. This theory has lately received a strange confirmation in that curious experiment of "bottling up light." Card-board steeped in a solution of tartaric acid or a salt of uranium, was rolled into a cylinder and put into a tin tube, opened at the end, so as to line it. The mouth of the tube was then held up to receive the full rays of the sun: after a quarter of an hour, it was hermetically closed, and not opened until many weeks after. Some of the tubes experimented on were opened a week, some two, some a month, some several months after; but all, when placed mouth downward on to prepared photographic paper, left a distinct impression of the orifice: those which had been sealed up the longest gave the weakest; those which had been sealed up the shortest time, the strongest; but all gave a clear and complete impression of the orifice, like any other photograph taken by the light.

Water-spouts are luminous at night; and a luminous meteoric dust is on record as having fallen during the great eruption of Vesuvius in 1794, when a shower of fine dust gave out a pale phosphorescent light, like that of countless glow-worms in the air. Shooting-stars often leave streams of light behind them; and Admiral Krusenstern saw an aërolite leave a phosphoric band of light behind it, which lasted a whole hour. General Sabine and Captain Ross once sailed into an immense belt of light on the Greenland seas, about four hundred and fifty yards broad, which lighted up the ship like noonday—a belt that was sailed into and sailed out of, and remained for long like an arc of light between the sea and sky; and Loch Seavig,

which had the luminous cloud on its topmost mountain, has also globular lightnings—round balls of fire and light—wandering swiftly over its waters, to the terror of its boatmen. The fire of Saint Elmo, which Lord Napier saw, and which is common in the Levant—that bright harmless flame which envelopes mast-head and rigging in a pale greenish light—is of the same phosphoric class; so are the zodiacal lights of the tropics and the Aurora Borealis of the North Pole. Admiral Wrangel noticed that, during an Aurora Borealis, certain portions of the heavens, previously dark, were lighted up when a shooting-star passed, as if the whole atmosphere wanted but a match anywhere to set it all aflame with harmless fire. The part of Venus not lighted by the sun, often shines with a phosphorescent light of its own; so does the moon, called by the French, *lumière cendrée*; and yet it is worthy of remark that the Bologna stone, which gets phosphoric light from the sun and from lighted candles too, gets none from the moon. The elf-candles of Scotland, and the corpse-candles of Wales, are known now to be mere phosphoric lights flitting about the earth; though indeed some wills-o'-the-wisp have been found to be nothing worse than luminous gnats and daddy-longlegs with more light than science; like that *ignis-fatuus* of Dr. Derham's in 1729, which he saw playing about a thistle, and which was only a luminous insect.

Many flowers are phosphoric. The young daughter of Linnæus was fond of setting fire to the inflammable atmosphere round the essential oil glands of certain *fraxinellæ*, and making a fine blaze on dark, warm, sultry summer nights. Pursuing her play she stumbled on a truth, and by some chance was led to observe the phosphorescence of certain flowers; the great nasturtium being her especial point of observation. Since her time it has been found that most yellow or orange-coloured flowers are phosphorescent, if watched in the twilight during July and August when the atmosphere is highly electric, and not a particle of moisture is in the air. Among the most luminous are the sun-flower (*helianthus*); garden marygold (*calendula*); African marygold (*tagetes*); the tuberose; and the orange lily (*Lilium bulbiferum*): the brightest colours giving the highest radiance. This phosphorescence is not caused by luminous insects, as was proved by M. Haggern's microscopic examinations; but at one time they were thought to be organic and not conditional. Other flowers beside those enumerated, are found to be phosphorescent. On the 18th of June, 1857, Fries, the Swedish naturalist, was walking in the Botanical Gardens at Upsal, when he saw a group of poppies (*Papaver orientale*)—two or three out of the group—emit flashes of light. Many others observed the same thing, and the next day more than a hundred persons assembled there to watch the flowers "give out flames." So with the leaves of the American *Eriogonum macrocarpa*, or evening primrose; so with the milky juice of certain plants, especially of the *Euphorbia phosphorea*,

which, if broken in the dark and rubbed on paper, traces characters of flame of vast significance and miraculous import in the ages when the priests alone knew the secrets of nature. So, one of the family of the pandanus or screw pine, the spathe of which enveloping the flowers, bursts with a loud noise, and sends out sparks as it bursts. The common potato, when decomposing, gives light enough to read by; a light so vivid, that, once, a cellar at Strasburg was thought to be on fire when shining with the phosphorescence of decomposing potatoes.

A small moss, called the *Schistostega osmundacea*—like the royal fern, *Osmunda regalis*, in miniature—shines brilliantly in the dark; and the *Rhizomorphæ*, humble little cryptogams which spread their thin dark roots abroad in cellars and caves and mines and on dank walls, have such a bright phosphoric light that they have been spoken of enthusiastically as the "vegetable glow-worms." In the caverns and granitic underways of Bohemia, the *Rhizomorphæ* often give light enough to read by; so they are said to do in the English coal mines; but nowhere are they so brilliant or beautiful as in the mines of Hesse, in the north of Germany, where they shine like bright moonlight through the galleries. A very beautiful fungus, the fire mushroom, or *Fungus igneus*, glows with a steady light when decomposing. This phosphorescence of some of the agaric tribe was first seen at Amboine, but afterwards in the Brazils, in an agaric which grows on the dead leaves of the *Pindoba* palm—the *Agaricus Gardneri*, so named from its discoverer. Also in a magnificent species to be found in the Swan River colony. Another mushroom, growing at the foot of the olive-tree in Italy, *Agaricus olearius*, gives a blue light at night; and the parasitic *Byssoid* fungi, which penetrate the tissues of superior fungi and of decayed wood, send their delicate filaments through and through the rotting fibres, especially of the willow, and make the whole mass alight with phosphoric glory. It is only the filaments of the mycelium, though, which are phosphoric; the perfect plant, of a fine blue colour, and known as the *Thelephora cœrulea*, is nothing more than blue and beautiful: it is not a light-bearer.

The sea, too, contributes to the light-bearers liberally. Macartney's *Medusa pellucens* and *M. lucida*—umbrella-shaped long-haired things—are of the class; and the *Cancer fulgens*, a queer beast, like a shrimp or big sea-flea, found by Sir Joseph Banks, on the way from Madeira to Rio Janeiro, is another of the multitudinous phosphoric personages of the deep; for, indeed, their name is legion. Among the most curious is the *Pyrosoma Atlantica*, like a little cylinder of phosphorus; a small beast, which, when magnified, is seen to be tipped with spirals of flame: and the *Noctiluca miliaris*, to whose effulgence is due the phosphorescence of the English Channel, is another very strangely-shaped animal. Under a pocket lens, mere little round points of light—to the naked eye, an indistinguishable effect of light—when highly magnified they are found to be leaf, or, perhaps better,

heart-shaped beings, with a complex centre and a network of branching filaments—beings with a stalk, making them more than ever like heart-shaped leaves, and each animal highly phosphorescent. Then there are things like ornamented spindles, with the threads flying; and things like transparent beans; some like Florence flasks standing on two legs, belted round the middle, and filled with plums; some like a boy's kite, with turnip-shaped excrescences; and others like steel traps, with teeth set in a row below; some like hairy mushrooms, with roots and streamers; some like fantastic cucumbers; some plummy like rushes, and others feathery like birds; many, and of all forms and classes; so many, indeed, that, in 1854, the phosphorescent marine animals then known, were upwards of a hundred distinct species; and the number has increased since then. But, unlike the herring and the mackerel, and other fish, which become luminous only when dead and decaying, these invertebrate light-bearers are luminous only when living; the phosphoric substance—which can be collected, according to the testimony by experience of MM. Edoux and Soulezet, and which is yellowish, viscous, and soluble in water—losing its luminosity after it has been separated for a few moments from the body of the animal.

Common earthworms—the lumbrices according to science—are known now to be phosphorescent, though a fierce dispute was once waged on that question; some naturalists declaring that the crawling things which left a trail of light behind them on the garden-path in warm, dry, summer evenings, were not earthworms, but centipedes, scolopendres; but the fact is pretty firmly established now that earthworms as well as centipedes are luminous, and that centipedes are only luminous after exposure to the sun, though earthworms are often turned up out of manure-heaps shining and phosphorescent. A most singular and important fact; if, indeed, it is an absolute fact, and not a mere fancy of the observation. Other insects, too, are phosphorescent. The glow-worm—*lampyrus*; the fire-fly—*elater*; the Chinese lantern-fly—*fulgora*; will occur to the mind of every one as the typical forms of insect luminousness; but the curious *Passus sphaerocerus*, which bears its two lanterns on its horns like gig-lamps, is less known; and that the eyes of the *Noctua psi*, a little grey night-moth, marked with the Greek character ψ on its wings; the eyes of the silkworm-moth, *Bombyx cossus*; some caterpillars; our old British friend the daddy-longlegs, under rare circumstances; and some beetles of indigestible names and horny bodies—that all these are phosphoric and luminous is a fact known only to the more careful observers. The eyes of beasts have often strange lights within and behind them. Some monkeys have phosphorescent eyes; and Dr. Phipson speaks of one man, only one, whose eyes emitted a metallic pink light, something like the green shine of a dog's eyes; but the same kind of thing has been seen with others of frail and remarkable constitutions. Dr. Kane mentions in his journal a curious case of phosphorescence

covering the metallic parts of a pistol, as well as the hands of himself and his friend Petersen, then holding it. It was intensely cold at the time, and the atmosphere was highly electric; and then came the phosphorescence of the metal and of their own living flesh, as bright and steady as a glow-worm's light, showing every mark and crease of the skin, and the whole length of the pistol; enabling them to see what they were about in that desolate hut; helping them to get a flame, upon which their salvation depended.

Strange phosphoric appearances have been seen in the dying and diseased. A pale moon-light-coloured glimmer was seen playing round the head of a dying girl about an hour and a half before her last breath. The light proceeded from her head, and was faint and tremulous like the reflexion of summer lightning, which at first, those watching her, mistook it to be. The story is told by Marsh in his *Essay on the Evolution of Light from the Living Subject*. Another case reported by a medical man in Ireland, was that of a consumptive patient, in whose cabin strange lights had been seen, filling the neighbourhood with alarm. The medical man, Dr. Donovan, went to the cabin and watched, and out of fourteen nights succeeded in three; once seeing a luminous fog like the *Aurora Borealis* round the man, and twice "scintillations, like the sparkling phosphorescence exhibited by sea infusoria." He vouches for the truth of what he saw, and the absence of all imposture. A third instance was that of an Italian woman at Milan lying dangerously ill (she did not die, as it turned out), who gave off a phosphoric flame which avoided the hand when carried against it, and was finally dispersed by a current of air. And have not phosphoric lights been seen in hospitals upon wounds, upon dead and decaying flesh in dissecting-rooms, and in butchers' shops? Boyle's famous neck of veal, which had more than twenty phosphorescent places in it, is one of the most striking instances on record; but Dr. Phipson gives others, which the curious may read for themselves. At all events, the fact is proved that dead flesh before decaying may become phosphorescent, and that even the living flesh when diseased, or before death, or when hurt as in wounds, can also be luminous. But the subject is in its infancy yet, and even Dr. Phipson, who knows more about it than any other living man, does not always know where to draw the line between electricity and phosphorescence, or to determine which is which, or what is either.

MY COUNTRY-HOUSE IN PERSIA.

I AM living in a garden. My companions are birds, and trees, and flowers. I know them all intimately, and they are all quick with the delicious airy life of fairyland. I know the talking-bird, who seems to discourse to me of worlds invisible, telling me to be content with the great joy of living. Perhaps he has brought his sweet grave talk from some unseen paradise, which human eyes are not yet blessed enough to be-

hold. I know the breeze, that comes at noon-day, fresh from the mountains, like a wild romp, tossing about the leaves, and breaking the still sunshine of my garden. I know the gentle zephyrs, stealing along like lovers' sighs, scarcely heard, but felt delightfully. I know the airs of early morning, so fresh and friendly; and I know the sound of the trumpet, which comes from the king's palace at dawn. It is a laughable trumpet, though the trumpeter, a solemn man, whom I know also, is very proud of it. I know the water, which comes rushing all over my garden like a prodigal prince with his train, who only deigns to visit me twice a week. I know, also, the divine calm of the daybreak, and could translate into earthly words the birds' hymn of thanksgiving for the return of day. All nature prays at the dawn of a summer day in the East.

At night the moon is my mistress. She is so near, she seems quite at home among my flowers, as if she lived with them, or had a palace of gems in the snowy mountain at whose base my garden grows.

Around me there is a fresh and wonderful exuberance of life. The whole garden blooms in the magnificent pomp of an Asiatic midsummer, and looks like one gorgeous nosegay. Roses are there in such profusion that they clamber up the stems of tall trees, and smother the very leaves of them with the multitude of their buds and blossoms. Trunk and branches seem all stifled and conquered in that soft embrace. I lie down even upon roses—such a swarming bevy of fragrant beauties as might have been at the court of the Princess Badoura. Nature showers her gifts over the land with disorderly generosity. Nothing can keep in its place for some other thing that struggles with it. The flowers go clambering and strolling over walls and walks like beautiful unruly children, wild with delight, and liberty, and health. There is every day a succession of new flowers. Yesterday my garden was all white, to-day it seems blue; to-morrow it may be rose-colour again, as it was a week ago, but every day brings something new and lovelier than the day before, revealing wonders of nature and unsuspected changes.

The very sky seems made up of jewels heaped together in store from heaven's own treasury. Here, near the sun, are some small bright-tinted clouds which look like a cluster of priceless rubies and opals tossed carelessly upon the skies, from the brow of some fair Spirit at repose. Near them is a fine mosaic of turquoise and white cornelian intermingled, which might serve to pave one of the courts of heaven; and yonder, on the verge of the horizon, are endless fields of amethyst. Round the sun himself, cluster diamonds of intolerable brightness, and round the moon, his bride, are pearls. Very beautiful is the milky way on moonless nights. My nozzir, or butler, 'oo, has peculiar opinions respecting the milky way. He informs me, that at the time of the Flood the windows of heaven were opened, and these light streaks in the sky come from chinks that could not be properly closed again.

I am living in two climates. Around me, in my garden, is sunshine, bright and warm. Roses of purple and rich yellow hues, such as are never seen in our parterres, bow their lovely heads ceremoniously to each other in demure merriment, and turn aside from the wooing airs to titter and whisper among themselves. Small white leaves of unknown flowers, who are gathered together in a countless host, fall with every light wind, making mimic snow, as if in mockery of the wintry storm. But beyond, on the mountain close by, is real snow and ice; I have the snow to cool my sherbet, and it is served to freshen my fruits. The ice is like crystal, enchanted crystal, which dissolves in a thousand lustrous hues as I look at it.

My nozzir, who sees me sometimes looking musingly upwards at the snow on peak and in ravine, tells me that the sky is made of ice, and that is why the summits of all mountains which approach near to it are frozen.

If I go in-doors to seek the shade at noon, bright carpets are spread beneath my feet, and the room in which I doze through the heat of the day, in company with pleasant visitors from dreamland, is full of Eastern luxuries. The floor is strewn with embroidered cushions, soft divans, and shawls, and gilded vases; and cambric pillows filled with rose-leaves to cool the heated temples and invite repose, that I may be fresh and wakeful in the glorious night-time. By-and-by the walls around are painted with flowers, and bright with gilding newly done. Looking-glasses are let into them and reflect a bearded personage whom I hardly recognise as the cropped and shaven Englishman who read the City article in the Times with such interest, and who wore such very tight clothes, and who was all bestrapped and umbrellaed in a club-house, a few months ago. My windows are of stained glass, very small, and diamond-shaped like those in English cottages; but when the sun shines through them they look like beautiful jewels. I can fancy I am living in the palace of gems which the slave of the lamp built for Aladdin, and I must be careful not to ask for a roc's egg, lest it should all tumble down and vanish. It is neither of one story nor of two, but both! part of it being of one story, and part of it two. It might have been built by a child at play with cards. There is a range of rooms, some high and some low, round a spacious court with a fountain in the centre, and a piece of ornamental water, round which strut birds of gorgeous feather; and a fawn gambols and plays with my nozzir's daughter, a little maid scarce five years old. The fountain is blue and silver, full of living waters, talking always. Over the low rooms are other low rooms, the two together about the size and height of one high room, but not quite, and so quaint juts and corners and holes make up the difference. Wooden shutters are in front of these rooms, and extend, like French windows, almost from the ceiling to the ground. Above these shutters are constructed queer little spaces like a honeycomb.

They are covered sometimes with stained glass, and sometimes with oil-paper painted of many colours, and they serve for windows. When these shutters are open, the room is shaded from the sun by a prettily striped canvas awning. There are nests of little pigeon-holes and nooks, and shelves and corners, about the rooms, that there is a place for everything. It is quite a doll's house.

My palace had nearly all fallen down when I took it; though it belonged to a prince of the blood. But it was built up again as if by magic. A rush of workmen appeared. They fumed about, and halloed to each other, and fought and were beaten, and behold! the house rose from its own ruins. To be sure the walls are only built of mud and water. When the winter rain comes they will be washed away again. About my house are spiders, so big as to be quite bogey spiders; and there are preposterous giants of beetles who patrol my floors at night, and aldermen blue-bottles, and fleas like dwarf crabs.

A man has been sent for from the city on the day of my arrival to make my bed, which is a laughable mass of wool in a silken sack of scarlet and yellow. He arrives on horseback and clatters into my room as if on an errand of life and death. Then he sits down to talk and smoke with my nozzir as if he had nothing to do at all. By-and-by he sits on his knees beside an immense instrument like a harp with one string, and takes a large mallet of polished wood in his right hand. Then comes my nozzir and rips open the bed with a carving-knife, and together they beat out the wool, lock by lock, to a pleasant kind of music, looking as serious as children at play the while. A tomaun is given to the bed-maker, and he gallops away again as he came.

The roof of my house, which overlooks a wide landscape, and is flat as a terrace, would be a pleasant walk when the sun has gone down, and it would be nice to dine there on these dewless evenings, and look down upon the garden, and confound the politics of the earwigs and spiders who seek one's acquaintance in the gloaming. But there are some peasants' houses about, which my terrace commands, and I might witness a lady's toilet; so that this would not do at all.

I have a great many servants—wonderful people—red and blue, and yellow, and black, and white. Their names are all from the Arabian Nights—Hassan and Ahmed, and Ali, Noureddin, Mohammed, and Ibrahim, Sadik and Kerrin. My household, also, is quite patriarchal. I call my servants "Badcha," my children; and we are indeed of the same family. But they are seldom at home, and their friends, also of variegated colours, come to supply their places. It is all the same; half a score of rice-eaters are ready at any time to do my bidding. I might have a dozen more if I chose, all watching my looks, thinking me a curiosity, bragging about me as subordinate to themselves, making good sayings for me, and carrying them hither and thither about the bazaars. They take little things off my desk or dressing-table, and show them to astonish their friends of many hues. Sometimes

they bring them back again; sometimes they omit this ceremony. One of them walked about all day yesterday with a little patent match-box, and everybody to whom he exhibited it cried "Wonderful!" My servants are eternal talkers, and always find such excellent reasons for all they do, that it is impossible to catch them tripping, and it is far better to submit to their ways. It is also, I find, far cheaper. If I am so extravagant as to have a difference of opinion with any of them, he is sure to come to me the next day and say, "Ah, Sahib! because you broke my heart last night you must give me a new coat." I do not find by experience that a refusal to do so ever settles the question.

I have Aladdin's talismans, and the Slave of the Lamp and the Slave of the Ring at my call. Sometimes a genius with a flowing beard, and dressed in bright-coloured silks and satins, comes in to bring me a pretty turquoise, or a golden bridle-chain. Perhaps I shall have to pay for that turquoise and gold chain, if I keep them. Perhaps they have been brought to me for sale by a wandering trader, or some neighbour's servant. But I prefer to think that they are given to me by a genius as enchanted gifts, or that they are sent to me as among the wonders of the world by some friendly magician. A bridle-chain which will give my horse the fleetness of the wind, a turquoise which will render me invisible to my enemies.

When I smoke, I seem to have an enchanted pipe made of a living man, all blue and yellow and gold; with a face dark and handsome, and with humble eyes. The pipe walks away when I have done with it, and talks if I speak. The bowl of my pipe is of gold, enamelled round with portraits copied from an English Book of Beauty, which, somehow or other, found its way to Tehran.

If I ask for food, it comes in such a tray as the Fairy Pari-Banou might have served to Prince Ahmed in her palace of rocks. Fragrant wines, bright as amber, and smelling all of flowers, in bottles of unknown shape, are upon the tray; and large fruits, melons of great size, and grapes in gigantic bunches freshly gathered, with the virgin bloom upon them. Meats, too, are there, served in tempting mouthfuls upon silver skewers of cunning device, and snowy flaps of bread, thin as a handkerchief, to protect my fingers when I take the dainty morsels still frothing from the fire. Iced sherbets and milk curiously prepared and whiter than snow, with rice like pearls, and pomegranate pips like rubies, and pickles cut in quaint figures, with wild truffles and sweet honeycomb. This is my meal. It is all like enchantment. It comes in at a sign, and goes away at a sign. It comes noiselessly on men's heads, while I am listening to the cuckoo flitting from tree to tree, and to the nightingales who sing here in the daytime. It goes away while I am asking the leaves of the Marguerite for the secret of my lady's heart.

If I lose any of my treasures, my nozzir, a stately man—plum coloured—will propose to send for the king's astrologer. The king's

astrologer will come with his conjurations and discover the thief by magical arts. Then every one will be in such a fright that the lost article will be speedily found, or the thief will have taken sanctuary at the tomb of a saint, leaving his place vacant in the household. Then my nozzir will tell me how, once upon a time, wishing to dispose of an enemy, he appealed formally to the said astrologer, who caused his enemy's death by writing the name of that enemy upon a piece of paper, and burying it in the earth. He will assure me that no secrets are hidden from the astrologer; and that he is the most potent of magicians.

My cook wishes to go to the bath. If I gently hint to him that we have not dined, he admits this cheerfully, but adds that his brother will cook to-day, for he has tried a fall in the Koran, and finds that it will be lucky for him to bathe now. There is no resisting such an argument as this. So his brother arrives speedily to cook the dinner. He is a yellow man, and comes on horseback of course, bringing other brothers with him; and a lamb which is to be roasted whole in my garden. It is soon skinned and spitted on the branch of a tree, a large fire is made upon the ground, and it roasts merrily. Bearded figures, eager for the feast, gather busily round it, thwacking each other, and quarrelling loudly from time to time. Among them is a bottle of wine as big as a watering-pot. It must hold at least two gallons. No such bottle and no such cooks are to be seen elsewhere but in a pantomime. The lamb roasted whole is brought in at last with a mighty fuss and bustle, and a slice from the shoulder, which is supposed to be the daintiest morsel, is specially cut out for me. For a lamb is rather a rarity, and is not always to be had in Persia. A lamb, say the shrewd shepherds, grows up to be a sheep, and a sheep is worth more than a lamb.

During the Moharrem, my gardener asks for leave to go to a mosque and weep for the imams. I inquire why he wants to weep! and he tells me that moollahs say that angels descend and catch the tears of all who weep for these saints; and that their tears are carefully preserved and kept at the gates of paradise. Tears so shed, he assures me, should be put in a flask, for they are sovereign charms against sickness and the evil eye. Then I remember how ancient is the custom, and the words of the Psalmist, "Put thou my tears into thy bottle."

One servant stops abruptly while eating fruit, of which the Persians devour an incredible quantity in summer, and coming softly up to me, bows himself sideways, after the manner of his people, and respectfully inquires the exact time. I answer him, and he then asks to be excused from further attendance that day, in order that he may go immediately to a tailor and order the new coat which I have promised him. The stars, he declares, would not be propitious were the coat to be cut out at any other time. My nozzir begs that I will defer having a window mended till the next day, in order that he may consult a friend, who is a magician, on the subject.

Then I am of easy faith, for there is a marvellous childlike flavour about my servants' talk and stories, very Eastern and very charming. I love to be borne along in the far away current of these strange things, and let my household do with me as they will, following their customs, leading the same life as they do, which is a pleasure ever curious and new to me. It is said that the Persians are liars, and that the fine old tradition that they only know how to draw the bow and speak the truth is a fable. I do not say so. I think that they love to let their imaginations banquet upon mysteries.

My servants all have houses of their own, and speak very grandly about them. One servant knows a little English, and every now and then he comes to me with a melancholy face, and says, "I vont too goo too ooze," which means to say that he is wife-sick.

If I ride abroad, the deers—genii—are with me in the shape of five gorgeously-arrayed and mounted servants. If any person gets in our way, he is beaten out of it. My servants ride up to him at a hobbling canter, take his own stick from him, and belabour him soundly with it, one holding him by the collar, while another whacks away at him with both hands in the Punch and Judy style. The man who was in the way receives his beating very humbly, noticing it little more than if he was a wooden man; but sits quietly on his horse till my servants are out of breath, and return him his stick. Then he seems quite refreshed, and prances away playfully, flourishing his hand in the air as if nothing had happened, and they all go wheeling and capering round and about together. It must be a pantomime, or enchantment.

When we ride abroad, it is quite a jubilee. My servants, those wild horsemen, gallop round and round me, and have mimic fights with each other, and fire joy-volleys with their guns in the air, falling over and over often, and getting up again like wooden men who can do themselves no harm.

My horse is a milk-white Arabian. His housings are of gold and precious stones. The reins of his bridle are of light-blue silk, and tassels of silver hang from his neck with a talisman, upon which is written a verse from the Koran, to preserve us from the evil eye. On such a steed Firouz-Shah bore off the Princess of Bengal, and Codadad appeared for the first time before the King of Dyarbekir. Sometimes in our ride we meet a great lord who lives on the other side of the valley. It is the Sadrazam, the mightiest of the servants of the king of kings. He is a handsome man, of a noble and dignified presence. Toil, and thought, and public care may be read upon every line of a face such as men can hardly look upon without liking, or women without love. He rides along, attended by a splendid train of nobles, with their squires and men-at-arms, towards his country-house hard by. For his highness loves his garden, too, in this wonderful summer-time.

Occasionally we meet the king himself with a

great crowd of carriages, containing the ladies of the court, and horsemen, and soldiers, and led horses. He is a gracious prince, courteous and handsome. He fixes his eyes full upon us as we pass by, which is the royal manner of returning a salute in Persia. The king's dress is of that beautiful soft peach-colour which predominates in the finest shawls; he wears the armlets of jewels which belong to royalty, and the regal plume of diamonds in his hat.* With his majesty rides the heir-apparent. He is a pretty boy, with fresh, fat, little cheeks, just big enough to sit upon his horse.

But it is not always that I can make certain of an afternoon's ride. Just as we are about to start, a messenger may come in haste to ask my servants to a marriage, and they all go away by magic. We must ride when they come back. Our grand excursion is of course to Tebran, whither we are obliged to go on days of public ceremony. This is a very complicated affair indeed. We must commence and complete our little journey within the precise time fixed by an astrologer, who frequently obliges us with his company at dinner-time, and who has constituted himself a part of the establishment on all occasions of unusual solemnity. If this sage, however, should not be doing us the honour of a visit on that day, we send to consult him before we start, and we halt at a little distance from the city and despatch a messenger to his private residence, to ascertain that the stars have not changed their minds, and to make quite sure of things.

Then we go home by moonlight, with the nightingale band hymning loud anthems round us, and all the flowers and trees at prayer. There stands my house among the gardens, sleeping in the rays of the moon. But I shall find everybody up. No one ever seems to go to bed during the summer in Persia. And why should they? Even now I can see to read my brother's letter, which the gholaum has brought to-day from Tabreez, and sit down to dream of the homeland.

But here is my neighbour's daughter, a pretty little thing, wild as a gazelle, and as shy. She has a painted face, and fingers tipped with henna, and eyebrows dyed with reng. Her feet and arms are bare, but there are jewels of great price upon them. She is quite covered with gems, but her eyes are brighter than the brightest of them, and her skin is wondrous fair. On her little neck is a necklace of inestimable value. On one of her wee, wee fingers is a thimble of gold, prettily enamelled.

By-and-by comes my neighbour himself, whose darling she is; and he seems to love me because his child has chosen me for a playmate. So we fall a talking, and by-and-by comes supper and

* See page 403 of the last volume.

sherbets, and then day has dawned again, and the little child has fallen fast asleep in my arms with a shawl cast loosely round her. I fancy that it was not to disturb her, that her father stayed so late, and that he quoted the long, long passage from Saadi twice over. But now she wakes up, all life and prattle, and we rise to saunter towards my neighbour's house together, with a cloud of servants hovering round us. My neighbour means to give me pipes and tea; and as we are something more than mere acquaintances we shall take tea in the anderoon, and his wife will join us with her face uncovered. She is a buxom dame, and will make the morning gay with laughter and wild jests. As we go sauntering along, I notice an old crumbling wall with a turret in the centre which has been built upon my neighbour's land, without any apparent reason. It is so massive, so old, and so time-worn, that I ask him who built it.

"Hoolookoo-Khan, grandson of Ghenghis-Khan," says my nozzir, joining respectfully in the conversation, "built it for one of his treasure castles."

But my neighbour reproves him mildly, and, with the air of a sober reasoner settling a vexed question upon undoubted authority, turns to me kindly, and says, "All persons are of opinion that it was built by the deevs, or genii."

When we have breakfasted we shall probably ride out together hawking, or slip a leash of Kurdish greyhounds after a hare, or wander away amidst the sunshine, idly watching the pigeons who live in holes among the rocks, and pass in clouds hither and thither, with swift and troubled flight. Perhaps, by-and-by, too, we shall dine on fruits, and milk, and roasted lambs, in another garden, a gallant troop of banqueters, with our horses picketed among the trees, and likely enough some merry laughter coming from lattice and balcony will show that my neighbour's anderoon has followed us, and my little friend and I may have a romp among the roses.

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